STUDIES IN THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

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STUDIES IN THE PASSION

OF

JESUS CHRIST

BY

CHARLES HENRY ROBINSON, D.D.

HON. CANON OF RIPON AND EDITORIAL SECRETARY OF THE S. P. G.

VIA CRUCIS VIA LUCIS

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA
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PREFACE.

As the Jewish lawgiver "whom the Lord knew face to face" had need to remove his shoes from his feet in order that he might approach the burning symbol of the Divine presence in the Eastern attitude of prayer, so he who would contemplate the love of God revealed to the world in the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ has need to do so on bended knee. The interpretation of the vision of his crucified Lord was granted to S. Paul when it could be said of him "behold he prayeth," and those who would share his "understanding in the mystery of Christ," which was "hid from all ages and generations but hath . . . been manifested to his saints," must prepare themselves in like manner to receive the same revelation.

The author of these "Studies" (the writing of which has occupied fourteen years) is painfully conscious of their limitations and defects, and is

able to sympathise with those who feel that what they want is not to hear about, but to enter into communion with, their Saviour, whilst in reverent silence they pour out their hearts before Him, and who would adopt as their own the words which Henry III. used to one of his courtiers when asked by him why he attended Mass more frequently than he listened to sermons: "I would rather speak to my Friend than hear about Him".

In so far as these "Studies" fulfil the object with which they have been written, they will help to produce in their readers an attitude of mind which will lead them to draw near on bended knee to the foot of the Cross to learn afresh in silent communion with their Saviour the meaning of His Death and Passion.

No reference has been made to any particular theory of the Atonement that was completed by Christ's death, but the absence of such is not intended to imply that in the opinion of the writer a clearly defined belief is not of vital importance.

There is a danger lest a reaction against the crude theories of atonement which have been held by many in the past should lead men to be

satisfied with a merely emotional form of Christianity, or with the belief that somehow, though they cannot hope to learn how, the death of Christ has benefited the human race. The history of Christian Missions, whether in Europe during the first thousand years of our era, or in other lands during recent centuries, affords no ground for the supposition that an undogmatic form of the Christian faith, or a belief that Christ died simply as a martyr, and as other men have died, can transform the world, or help materially to decrease the sin and selfishness of mankind. On the contrary, a dogmatic belief that the life and death of Christ have redeemed the world, has been the motive force which has prompted all the missionary work achieved by the Christian Church. "I, if I be lifted up," said Jesus Christ, "will draw all men unto me." There are other great truths which He taught, such as the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of men, and the laws relating to the Kingdom of God, but the preaching of none of these has produced the effects upon the hearts and lives of men which have invariably followed in the case of those "before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified". The acceptance of the ethical

teaching of Christ has never sufficed to deliver men from their haunting sense of guilt, or brought relief to sin-burdened souls. If the world is to become Christian in this or any succeeding generation, it will not be by the acceptance of an undogmatic Christianity, but by the preaching of the redemption which through the life and death of Christ has become the potential possession of all men. The universal significance of His death explains in part the difficulty which attends all attempts to define its nature, nor can we hope to understand it until it has received a world-wide interpretation.

The Cross of Christ is at once a mystery and a revelation. It raises questions which we cannot answer relating to the nature and scope of vicarious suffering, at the same time that it reveals, as no other event in human history has revealed, the all-embracing love of the universal Father.

The appeal which the Cross of Christ embodies is the appeal which the insistent love of God makes to a world in which the absence of love is the greatest of all its evils. The only way to save the world is to fill it with love, for love is the light which can alone dispel the darkness of

sin. Upon those who have learnt to see in Jesus Christ their Saviour and Redeemer rests the obligation to reflect His love upon the dark world around them, and so to draw all men to the foot of their Master's Cross, where they will become conscious of the resistless appeal of His love :—

Thou must love Me who have died for thee.

CHARLES H. ROBINSON.

February, 1911.

The quotations from the New Testament in the following Studies are from the Revised English Version unless it is otherwise stated.

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I.

THE STORY THAT TRANSFORMED THE WORLD.

In the Tribuna of the Uffizi Gallery at Florence a tourist with guide-book in hand went up to the curator and said: "Are these your masterpieces? I do not see much in them myself." "Sir," said the curator, "these pictures are not on their trial: it is the spectators who are on their trial."

There are some to whom the Gospel portrait of Jesus Christ makes little appeal, and who study the scenes which were enacted on the first Good Friday as they would study any other historical scenes, and are disposed to ask whether the significance of what then happened has not been overestimated. The answer to their question is: "The portrait of Christ which the writers of the Gospels have handed down to us is not on its trial: it is the spectators who are on their trial".

The life of Jesus Christ which was consummated upon the Cross makes an appeal to the moral consciousness of the whole human race, and those to whom this appeal comes, "before

whose eyes," to use S. Paul's words, Jesus Christ has been "openly set forth crucified,"[1] but who make no response, do not thereby cast discredit upon Christianity, but they attest their incapacity to appreciate the highest form of goodness, and isolate themselves at once from Christ and from all the Christ-like men and women of the present and the past.

There was a time when it would have required deep spiritual discernment to recognise in the Cross of Christ the embodiment of the force which would one day transform the world.

Let us try to imagine that we had been in Jerusalem on the first Good Friday afternoon, and that we had asked a Jew to tell us what he regarded as the centre of the world's power, and the embodiment of the force which might some day dominate the whole earth. Would he not have pointed to the temple and have reminded us of the glorious history connected with it in the past, and the still more glorious future which he had been led by his religious teachers to anticipate for it in the time that was to come? His nation, he would have reminded us, had been God's chosen people in the past, and would in the future become the instrument of Divine blessing to the whole world; and to the temple

[1] Gal. iii. 1.

in Jerusalem representatives of all the races of the world would eventually come. Suppose that whilst we had been talking with the Jew a Roman had come up and that we had asked him the same question. Would he not have said to us: "The city of Rome is the mistress of the world and the embodiment of the power which rules the world, and which will do so more completely in the generations to come". Imagine once again that as we were talking with the Roman a Greek had passed by, and that we had put to him the same question, would he not have made answer: "Have you seen Athens? She is the centre of the world's thought and culture. As intellectual is superior to and will outlast material force, so will the influence of Athens excel and outlast that of Rome." Such, we can well imagine, would have been the answers to our question which we should have received in turn from Jews, Romans, and Greeks. Would they not all have laughed us to scorn if we had pointed to the Cross, visible from the city walls, and said: "He who hangs dead upon that Cross is the centre of the world's power. The temple will be so completely destroyed that its exact site shall become a matter of dispute; the material and political power of Rome will pass away and will be of interest but to the

student of history; the teaching and philosophy of Athens will continue to appeal only to a cultured few, but the knowledge that on this day yonder sufferer died upon the Cross will become a motive power which shall transform the world."

Bold as such words would then have sounded, only those who know nothing of history would dare now to dispute that they would have been abundantly justified. The story that has transformed the world is the story of the Cross.

The appeal which the Cross of Christ makes does not depend for its effect upon a vivid realisation of the physical sufferings which He endured. The contemplation of these has often produced an emotional sympathy which has been transitory and ineffective. It is interesting to note that during the first four or five centuries of the Christian era, when instances of Christ-like devotion and self-sacrifice were specially common, and Christianity was of a robust and masculine character, the use of the crucifix was unknown, and no picture or representation of Christ's death upon the cross was attempted. The early Christians were restrained from attempting such partly by a feeling of reverence, and partly by their unceasing contemplation of their risen and glorified Saviour.

There is a danger lest by emphasising the physical sufferings of Christ, by fixing our thoughts upon the thorns, the nails, or the scourge, we should materialise our religious conceptions and render it more difficult for us to realise the spiritual issues which were then at stake and at the same time the closeness of the connection between the experience of Christ and that which is, or may be, our own.

Of the thirty thousand Jews who were crucified by order of Titus after the siege of Jerusalem many must have endured more protracted physical sufferings than those of Christ, but their sufferings did not save their names from oblivion or their country from ruin. It is not the physical sufferings which form the chief factor in the age-long appeal that Christ's death has made to the hearts of men, but the appeal has depended for its strength upon the conviction that His death was the consummation of a spiritual victory in which they had an immediate concern.

The annual commemoration of the death of Christ invites men to draw near afresh to His Cross and to witness the decisive battle in a campaign which is being carried on in their own hearts, and in the hearts of all who are striving to live a good and unselfish life. Here is the crucial and deciding battle, the issue of which is of no mere

historical interest, but directly affects the destiny alike of individuals and mankind.

There is no race or people to whom this appeal, when it has been apprehended, has been made in vain. A savage Bechuana, on hearing the story of the Cross, was deeply moved and exclaimed: "Jesus, away from there. That is my place." The early Moravian missionaries in Greenland laboured for years to teach their hearers the principles of right and goodness, but without result. When, however, they read to them the Gospel account of the death of Christ, one of them exclaimed: "Why did you not tell us this before? Tell us it again." Its repetition was speedily followed by the conversion of many of their hearers. If Christian missions have done nothing else, they have proved that the earth contains no race so degraded but that the story of the Cross can appeal to it. To take one further illustration, this time from the once cannibal Maoris of New Zealand: Bishop Selwyn wrote in 1840:—

"I am in the midst of a sinful people, who have been accustomed to sin uncontrolled from their youth. If I speak to a native on murder, infanticide, cannibalism, and adultery, they laugh in my face, and tell me I may think these acts are bad, but they are very good for a native, and

they cannot conceive any harm in them. But on the contrary when I tell them that these and other sins brought the Son of God, the great Creator of the universe, from His eternal glory to this world, to be incarnate and to be made a curse and to die—then they open their eyes and ears and mouths, and wish to hear more, and presently they acknowledge themselves sinners, and say they will leave off their sins."[1]

Speaking of the love of God revealed in the Cross of Christ as the means by which sinful man may become reconciled to God, Professor Harnack writes :—

"The deepest and most earnest Christians embrace Jesus Christ, not only as the Prophet but as the Reconciler. . . . They consider His passion and His death as vicarious. . . . In presence of the Cross no other feeling, no other note, is possible. Let us, with reverential reticence, gaze upon the Cross of Christ from which God shines forth as the Infinite Love. It is a holy secret not understood of the profane, and yet 'the power of God and the wisdom of God'."[2]

Those who endeavour to approach the Cross of Christ with the child-like simplicity of the inhabitants of non-Christian lands to whom it is

[1] *Cf.* "Life of Bishop Selwyn," p. 72.

[2] "The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought," p. 124.

presented for the first time may hope to feel its inspiring and transforming influence upon their lives. The language of one of the Passion hymns[1] will become the expression of their thought and feeling :—

Upon that Cross of Jesus
Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffered there for me.
And from my smitten heart with tears
Two wonders I confess,
The wonder of His glorious love
And my own worthlessness.

Although it is disappointing to observe how small a proportion of the working-men of England regularly attend either church or chapel, it is encouraging to note that some who would be unwilling to subscribe to any dogmatic statement concerning the Atonement are not ashamed to own Jesus Christ as their Master and their Saviour. At a recent international gathering of workmen held at Lille in Belgium the representatives from England who took part in a procession through the streets carried banners on which were inscribed the words : "We represent five hundred thousand English workmen. Our brotherhood is founded on the teaching of Jesus

[1] By E. C. Clephane.

Christ. We proclaim the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men."[1]

Mr. Keir Hardie, who was for some years the leader of the Labour party in the English House of Commons, formed one of this procession, and in the course of an address which he gave immediately afterwards to the members of the Conference, he said: "Labour men cannot afford, even if they were inclined, to neglect Christianity. . . . [Christ] belongs to us in a special degree, and the Brotherhood Movement is tending to restore Jesus to His rightful place as the Friend and Saviour of the poor. . . . By working together, whether inside or outside the organised Christian Church, we shall be serving Him who loved us, and loved us so much that He gave His life for us."[2]

At the foot of the Cross we become conscious of the meaning of S. Paul's words (2 Cor. v. 14), "the love of Christ constraineth us". No man can say, "He loved me and gave himself for me," and at the same time deny that all men throughout the world have an equal right with himself

[1] The actual inscriptions were: Nous representons 500,000 ouvriers Anglais. Notre base est l'enseignement de Jesus Christ. Nous proclamons la paternité de Dieu et la fraternité des hommes."

[2] "P.S.A. Brotherhood Journal," June, 1910.

to say the same. Before the Cross of Jesus Christ all racial and class distinctions disappear.

The only answer that a man can give to the question, Why has the love of Christ been revealed to me while it has not been so revealed to a thousand million of my fellow-countrymen? is that the love of Christ is intended to quicken within me the missionary impulse in order that through me His love may be made intelligible to others. This thought is developed in a letter to a friend by one who writes:—

"Sometimes when I look round and see how some men, who are infinitely nobler and better than I am, some who have taught me more than they know, and of whom I am utterly unworthy: sometimes when I see these men struggling to find the Truth, unable definitely to receive the facts of the Christian revelation, I feel unutterably contemptible. Why should I see truth, as I believe, and why should they not? Why am I given an advance book in God's great school and they are kept back? And yet they are immeasurably better than I am, and some have better intellectual power also. I know that I hold that lesson-book in trust for them, that as I learn I must live out the truth, and teach as well as learn from them. But why was I entrusted with truth? And why cannot I communi-

cate it? Why can I love a man almost better than myself, and yet be unable to make him see the light that is blinding my eyes? These are questions which you cannot answer and which I cannot answer. The answer is 'behind the veil'."

II.

STANDING BY THE CROSS OF JESUS.[1]

"*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"[2]

THE original application of these words cannot be limited to the soldiers who nailed Christ to the Cross. They were but doing what they would have considered to be their duty as soldiers. Had they disobeyed the orders given by their superiors they would themselves have been punished with death. They had, moreover, no means of knowing how unjust was the sentence which they had been ordered to carry out. It is clear that in their original intention the words must have included the scribes and Pharisees who had planned the death of Christ, the crowd who had endorsed their demand, and Pilate who had sanctioned its execution. This wider interpretation of the prayer is endorsed by S. Peter's words addressed to the Jews in Jerusalem: "I

[1] S. John xix. 25. [2] S. Luke xxiii. 34.

wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers".[1]

Christ's prayer for those who were the cause of His death is grounded upon the assumption that their motives were not as bad as their actions implied. He had on several occasions taught His disciples that they ought to believe good of those who appeared to be their enemies, and that it was their duty to place the best construction upon the motives which prompted the action of others,[2] and in His dying hours He gave them an object-lesson wherewith to enforce His teaching. The lesson is one which His followers have found it hard to learn. The experience of most men has been that when, in obedience to their Master's command, they have learnt to forgive even seventy times seven, they have done so with their eyes shut, that is they have forgiven those who have injured them without altering the opinion which they had formed as to the character of their actions or the motives which lay behind them. In acting thus they have been content with an ideal which falls far below that which Christ's dying words inculcate. Those who would act in the spirit of this prayer must accept the obligation which they imply, not

[1] Acts iii. 17.

[2] *Cf.* "He that is not against us is for us." S. Mark ix. 40.

only to forgive every kind of personal injury and insult which may be offered to them, but to believe in the existence of latent good in the case of those who injure them, and to put the best interpretation upon their motives of action.

What a revolution would be created if this obligation were to be accepted by all nominal Christians. How brief would the leading articles in our political and religious newspapers become if all suggestions of unworthy motives on the part of those who disagreed with the writers were to be eliminated from their columns. How difficult would it be to sell a daily paper which invariably placed the most charitable construction upon the speeches and actions of those who were opposed to the policy which it advocated.

It is instructive to note that this saying of their Master sank deep into the hearts of some of His early disciples. S. James, when being thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple, is reported to have said: "O Lord, pardon them, for they know not what they do". S. Peter, addressing the Jews in Jerusalem, said: "I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers".[1] S. Paul, writing to the Christians at Corinth, said: "Had they known . . . they would not have crucified the Lord of glory".[2]

If the plea for the forgiveness of His enemies

[1] Acts iii. 17. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 8.

was based upon their ignorance of the true character of their actions, it was based also upon the relationship which existed between them and God which all their ignorance and indifference had failed to destroy. The title by which Jesus Christ addressed God in the first and last of His utterances from the Cross was one which, as He had ever taught not only His apostles but the mixed crowd to whom the Sermon on the Mount was addressed, they might themselves use.

It was as the representative of the whole human race that He addressed God as His Father. It is because we know that "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus"[1] is "God and Father of all"[2] men, that we believe that His prayer will be effective, and that His death will "gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad".[3]

As we think of the incredulity and indifference with which Christ's message of love to the world is often received, and of the general neglect of the anniversary of His death, we are sometimes tempted to despair of the future of humanity. At such times we may comfort ourselves with the belief that His prayer still echoes in heaven, "Father, forgive, they know not what they do".

In the light which shines from the Cross we may look with something far removed from de-

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 31. [2] Ephes. iv. 6. [3] S. John xi. 52.

spair upon the sin and indifference which meet our gaze, and may believe that Christ's prayer on behalf of those who are ignorant of God's purposes of love will receive an answer and that their ignorance will not for ever deprive them of the benefits of His Cross and Passion.

The attempt to realise the relationship in which men now living stand to the death of Christ raises a question which it is important to consider. In what sense is it true to say that any one now living can regard himself as personally responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Is the language with which our popular hymns have made us familiar merely the language of poetry or poetical imagination? Faber's hymn, for example, which begins with the words, "O come and mourn with me awhile,"[1] goes on :—

> O break, O break, hard heart of mine,
> Thy weak self-love and guilty pride
> Betray'd, condemn'd and scourged the Lord,
> Jesus our Love is crucified.

Again the hymn which begins with the words, "Forgive them, O my Father,"[2] goes on :—

> It was my pride and hardness
> That hung Him on the Tree;
> Those cruel nails, O Saviour,
> Were driven in by me.

[1] "Hymns, Ancient and Modern," ed. 1904.
[2] By C. F. Alexander.

Might not any one who was invited to use these or similar words reply : "Eighteen centuries have passed away since Christ was crucified. He died long before I was born, or became capable of committing sin ; He would have died whether or no I had been destined to be born : How can I then be held responsible for an event which I could not have prevented and which, from the time that I was able to understand anything in regard to it, I disowned and condemned?" There are a few whose explanation of original sin enables them to give a ready answer to this question, but to most men the difficulty which it raises is very real.

It will be easier to estimate the responsibility of those who are now living for the death of Christ if we carry our thoughts back to the time when the crucifixion was a recent event. At that time it would have been obviously untrue to say that the only persons responsible for the crucifixion of Christ were the soldiers who nailed Him to the Cross, or to say that the responsibility for His death was limited to the Roman governor who condemned Him, or to those who took a visible part in procuring His condemnation. S. Peter, speaking to the people who had come together in the temple porch, many of whom had probably taken no part in, if they had

not disapproved of, the condemnation of Christ: "Jesus whom ye delivered up and denied," and again, "Ye killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead".[1]

The accusation which S. Peter brought against them was similar to that which Christ brought against the scribes and Pharisees whom He warned that upon them should "come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zechariah".[2] Those to whom Christ spoke professed the utmost respect for Abel and Zechariah, and for the line of prophets by which they were connected. Nevertheless, Christ's meaning must have been abundantly clear to those to whom His words were addressed. He taught that He had Himself come to complete the work which the prophets had begun, to proclaim the love of God to men and to summon them to abandon their selfish desires and to surrender their lives to its influence. By rejecting His message the Jews endorsed the rejection by their forefathers of the prophets who had been Christ's forerunners, and by doing so assumed responsibility for their action.

In like manner those to whom S. Peter spoke and to whom he attributed responsibility for the

[1] Acts iii. 13, 15. [2] S. Matt. xxiii. 35.

death of Christ were held by him to be responsible because they had virtually rejected Christ's message, inasmuch as they had not responded to His appeal to repent and to live their lives in accordance with the new revelation of God's love which He had brought to them.

The responsibility which attached to those to whom S. Peter spoke, attaches to men of all time and of all countries to whom the Christian message comes. The man who hears or reads the Gospel story to-day, and who learns therefrom the claim which God makes upon his life through the revelation of Jesus Christ, if he repudiate that claim endorses the action of the Jews and accepts responsibility for the rejection which culminated in His death.

As Good Friday comes round year by year, we realise more and more clearly that the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ is not merely a past event for us to remember with pity for the Man of Sorrows who was contented to be betrayed and given up, and to suffer death, or with admiration for One who fought so hard a fight against the prejudice and malice of his fellow-men, or even with gratitude for the benefits which His life and death have conferred upon humanity. In the scene that was then enacted we must take a part. We do not stand with the idle throng that goes

out from Jerusalem to see a spectacle; we are either amongst those who "crucify . . . the Son of God afresh," [1] or amongst those who by accepting Christ's standard as the standard of their lives and His revelation of God as the inspiration and guiding star of their actions, repudiate the deed of those who rejected and crucified Him.

[1] Heb. vi. 6.

"Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."[1]

To understand the significance of Christ's words it is necessary to consider what they must have meant to the man to whom they were spoken. If they are interpreted in the way in which the dying thief and the bystanders must have interpreted them, they imply that before the close of the day on which they were spoken, Jesus Himself and the thief were together in the place or condition which the Jews of Christ's time would have described by the word Paradise. What they would have understood by this word may be ascertained by an examination of its use in some of the books which were current among the Jews at this time. In part of the book of Enoch,[2] which was probably written between 1 A.D. and 50 A.D., and again in the second book

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 43.

[2] See Slavonic Bk. of Enoch, chaps. viii., xlii., and c.

of Esdras, written perhaps a little later, Paradise is referred to as the final abode of the righteous. In another part of the book of Enoch, written in the second century B.C. and translated from an earlier form of that book, it is said that Enoch and Elijah were admitted into Paradise on leaving this world. The Jewish Midrash or Commentary on the Psalms says that the dwellers in Paradise see the face of God and are nearer to Him than are the angels. The word occurs in two other passages in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians xii. 4, S. Paul speaks of himself as having been "caught up into Paradise," and in Revelation ii. 7, we read, "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God".

We cannot here attempt to discuss the change which the thief underwent when his soul was separated from his body, and when the promise made by Christ to him received its fulfilment, but if we desire to enter into the spirit which breathes in Christ's promise and to learn the lesson which it has to teach we cannot do otherwise than interpret it as it would have been interpreted by the man to whom it was intended to bring comfort and help. So interpreted it gives to us the assurance that in the hour of our death, or on the death of those whom we love, we

need not anticipate a long period of unconscious existence, but may expect that we or they will be united in close communion with our Saviour and in Him with those who are united to Him.

Of the previous history of the thief we know nothing. Like other Jews he had probably been taught to regard the coming of the Messiah's Kingdom as an event near at hand, but it required a faith of no ordinary kind to recognise in the fellow-sufferer by his side the very Messiah Himself. Never did any one look so little like a King. There had been times in the course of Christ's public life when it would have implied comparatively little faith to address Him as King, when, for example, after the strange portent which accompanied His birth, representatives of the wisdom of the East had rendered homage and laid at His feet their royal offerings, or, again, when the simple Galilean peasants had desired to take Him by force and make Him their King, or, yet again, when on the previous Sunday He had ridden into Jerusalem amidst the cries of His followers, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord".[1] But now the only sign of royalty was the superscription affixed to His cross in derision, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews".[2]

[1] S. Luke xix. 38. [2] S. John xix. 19.

The words uttered by the penitent thief show that a life of crime and violence had not destroyed his capacity for the exercise of faith, and encourage the belief that in the case of those whose past history is most discouraging there may exist a latent faith which may yet become active. It is conceivable that the thief had seen and heard Christ before, but it seems more probable that he saw Him for the first time when he was led forth with Him to be put to death. He would have heard the words addressed by Christ to the women of Jerusalem, he had perhaps read the inscription on the Cross and heard the taunts of the Jews, he had seen Christ reject the draught which might have lessened His sufferings, and had heard His prayer for His murderers, he had witnessed His patience and, as he admitted in his words of rebuke addressed to the other thief, he was aware that Christ had done nothing amiss.

One of those who was standing by the Cross of Christ, and who must have heard His words addressed to the thief, was the apostle S. John.

There is a story told by S. Eusebius, on the authority of Clement of Alexandria,[1] which, if we may accept it as true, would suggest that

[1] "Hist.," iii. 23.

Christ's treatment of the penitent thief had made a lasting impression upon him. Clement relates that S. John in the course of his travels in the neighbourhood of Ephesus came across a young man of exceptional promise, whom he committed to the charge of a Bishop to be brought up in the faith of Christ. Years passed away and the young man took to himself dissolute companions and eventually became the captain of a band of brigands who committed many crimes and were the terror of the neighbourhood. After a time S. John revisited the place and said to the Bishop: "Restore us the deposit which both I and Christ committed to thee". The Bishop burst into tears and exclaimed: "He is dead". He then explained what had occurred. The aged apostle immediately called for a horse and a guide and rode off into the mountains to look for the robber chief. He was taken prisoner by the band, and was brought into the presence of their leader, who on recognising him was overcome with shame and turned to flee. The apostle, who had stood by the Cross and heard His Master forgive the penitent thief, hastened after the brigand chief and said to him: "Christ hath sent me. If need be, I will willingly endure thy death, as the Lord suffered death for us." The chief trembled and wept bitterly and eventu-

ally allowed the apostle to lead him away and to restore him to the Church.

"With me in Paradise." The last two words addressed to the thief must be interpreted in the light afforded by the two which come before them.

We can form no truer conception of Heaven than that suggested by the words "with me," words which were echoed by S. Paul when he wrote I have "a desire to depart and be with Christ".[1] Christ did not promise to the dying thief any personal honour or reward, but He promised union with Himself. The words "with me" sum up all that man really knows about the future life—Heaven will be the opportunity for completer union with Jesus Christ.

How far removed from this conception has been the caricature of Christian teaching which has found credence amongst those who have regarded religion as a means for securing their individual happiness in a future life. In a book published a few years ago entitled "Dreams by a French Fireside,"[2] the author pictures the soul of a worldly man escorted after death to the vestibule of the other world, where he is met by an

[1] Phil. i. 23.

[2] "Dreams by a French Fireside," translated from the German by R. Leander.

angel who tells him that he is free to choose what he would like to have throughout eternity. After awhile the angel returns to ascertain his choice. In accordance with the character which the man had acquired on earth he chooses things which correspond with many previous choices, and the attainment of which appears to him to realise his idea of heaven. His choice is granted. After a day—and a day in that life is as a thousand years—the angel revisits the man and finds him in the uttermost depths of misery. "Do you call this heaven?" he asks with indignation. "No," replied the angel, "it is not heaven, it is hell, but you chose it." In our anticipation of the future life we can add nothing to the declaration of the old Jewish psalmist: "In Thy presence is the fulness of joy".

Some have found it hard to understand how the character of a man who had presumably led the life of a criminal could undergo so complete and sudden a change that union with Christ could be the immediate sequel to the life which he had previously led. In view, however, of our complete ignorance as to what his life had been, it is impossible to estimate the change which he experienced as he hung upon the cross. It is possible to suppose that he was a patriotic Jew who had not been a habitual criminal, but had

committed a comparatively small offence, for which he had been condemned to death in accordance with the law, as it was sometimes cruelly administered in the provinces of the Roman Empire. The very words of his request imply that he was not without some knowledge of God.

Whatever may have been his past story, his experience affords little ground for the assumption that the approach of death will render easy a change of character. Pain and the approach of death produced no such change in the case of his companion. It has been said that the Bible contains but one account of a death-bed conversion, one in order that no one should despair, one only in order that no one should presume.

It is not necessary to assume that the thief's character underwent in a moment of time such a complete change that he was transformed into a saint, or that his past was as though it had not been. All that we can certainly assume is that his aspirations were so changed that the forgiveness of the past would open out to him the opportunity and desire for upward progress.

Neither in this incident nor elsewhere in Scripture is there anything which would justify the supposition that the act of death will affect any change in a man's character, or aspirations.

All that we know of the development of character and of the continuity of human personality forbids us to believe that death, in which the action of man's free will may play no part, can produce any moral change upon his character. The man who has no desire to live in union with Christ here, can have no valid reason for supposing that he will desire to be with Christ hereafter.

On the other hand, in proportion as a man unites himself with Jesus Christ, will death, in the sense in which it is popularly understood, become for him, to use the words of Tennyson, "an almost laughable impossibility".[1] There will come to him with increasing frequency

> . . . moments when he feels he cannot die
> And knows himself no vision to himself
> Nor the high God a vision.[2]

To him who has become united to Christ here Paradise will be but the completer realisation of that eternal life of which he is already the possessor.

[1] "Memoir of Tennyson," p. 268.

[2] "These three lines in Arthur's speech are the spiritually central lines of the 'Idylls,'" Tennyson, see "Memoir," p. 493.

"Woman, behold thy son. . . . Behold thy mother."[1]

Jesus Christ was dying on behalf of the whole world, but neither the greatness of His suffering, nor the wide scope of His sympathies, caused Him to forget those to whom He was united by the ties of relationship or personal friendship. His third utterance from the Cross witnesses to His care for His mother in view of the immediate present, and His thoughtful provision for her future. Possibly the use of the word "woman" instead of one which would have suggested her relationship to Himself, was due to His desire to shield her from the insults of the bystanders, to which she might have been exposed had her relationship to Him become known.

The immediate occasion of the utterance of these words may have been Christ's desire to spare His mother the darkness which was coming on, and the sight of His death. His care for her future was shown by the foresight which pro-

[1] S. John xix. 26.

vided that the rest of her life should be spent under the roof of His best-loved disciple. By His dying care for His mother he set the seal of approval upon the most sacred relationships of family life. As a boy He had been obedient to His parents, and His first miracle had been wrought at the suggestion of His mother on the occasion of a wedding. Later on, when His mother, in company with His brethren, attempted to interrupt His public preaching, no rebuke fell from His lips, but words which, whilst they interpreted in terms of human relationships the love of God to men, served as an indirect reminder to her that she had no longer any special claim upon His obedience.

If it be true to say that Christ by His loving care for his mother's welfare hallowed and ennobled the relationships of family life, it is also true to say that this final appeal to the devotion of His beloved disciple set the seal of His approval upon human friendship. Some of His followers have been inclined to doubt whether human attachments are consistent with the acceptance of the highest ideals of life or whether they are not a sign of human frailty. The words which fell from the lips of the Divine Sufferer should provide a final answer to such questionings.

The love of Jesus Christ for individual men and women has given a new meaning to the word friendship. It was the sudden discovery that Jesus loved him which brought about the crisis in the development of Zacchæus' character; the irresistible attraction of His love caused one of His apostles to exclaim, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him," and another, with an enthusiasm which though it outran his courage was nevertheless the expression of the feelings of his heart, to say: "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee". The consciousness of Christ's love emboldened yet another of His apostles to lean upon his breast at the Last Supper. Once again it was the knowledge that her love was returned which caused the woman in Simon's house to forget everything else but His presence, in order that she might pour her costly ointment upon His head. Now in the very act of death, His love breathes in the words which He spoke to His mother and to the disciple whom He specially loved.[1]

[1] The question has been suggested, Why did not our Lord entrust His mother to one to whom she was actually related, instead of committing her to the care of a disciple? If we can accept Bishop Westcott's answer to this question the difficulty entirely disappears. He writes: "If, as appears most likely, the 'brethren' of Christ were sons of Joseph by a former mar-

His example serves to reinforce and interpret His words, "This is my commandment that ye love . . . even as I have loved".

The light reflected from His Cross reveals the Divine obligation which rests upon all who would be His disciples to love with a Christ-like love (1) those within their family circle, and (2) those to whom they have become united by the sacred bond of friendship.

(1) As Christ grew up to manhood and the horizon of His plans for the benefit of mankind became more and more extended, His love for His mother did not grow less. In the case, however, of some who have called themselves His followers it has been objected—and not without cause—that whilst they appeared to be devoted to the service of God and to the cause of humanity they nevertheless failed to display Christ-like sympathy and love within their own homes. Mrs. Jellaby, who was overcome with enthusiasm for the heathen inhabitants of Borioboolagar, but who had neither love nor care to bestow upon the members of her own family, was not altogether an invention of Dickens.

riage, and S. John was the son of the sister of the Lord's mother, the difficulty which has been felt as to the charge which he received in preference to the brethren, who appear among the first believers (Acts i. 14), wholly disappears. S. John was nearest to the Virgin by ties of blood" ("The Gospel of S. John").

Not every Christian has learnt to practise the truth which Confucius uttered when he said: "If the home duties are well performed, what need is there to go afar to offer sacrifice?" There is indeed nothing which limits the influence of the Christian Church whether at home or abroad more effectively than the failure on the part of its members to exhibit the spirit of Christ within their own homes.

The influence exerted upon non-Christians by the sight of a household controlled by the spirit of Christ may be gauged from a remark made by a Japanese delegate[1] at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. "The one thing," he said, "which appeals irresistibly to us in Japan is the Christian home."

(2) These words of Christ, as has already been suggested, set the seal of His approval upon human friendship.

God has conferred upon man, as a gift of supreme value, the capacity for forming friendships, and the example of Christ has revealed to him what is the Divine ideal of human friendship.

When Tennyson's "In Memoriam" was first published as an anonymous poem it was criticised adversely by several leading Reviews, on the ground that it represented a friendship which it

[1] Professor Harada.

was impossible to conceive as existing between one man and another in real life. It is encouraging to feel that this criticism would be accepted by few to-day, and that the ideal which is there portrayed has been recognised by most of its readers as at once true and Christ-like.

Of one to whom friendship meant a solemn trust and obligation, and who has recently passed away, a friend who had known him intimately writes :—

"Some of us were privileged to discover that what he felt for us was something far deeper and holier than is expressed by the word 'interest'. It was love. In every fullest sense he understood the grand full meaning of the word. His love for his friends was something altogether larger and deeper and truer than is generally understood by the word. It was so holy a thing that it is hard to write of it. He knew what in all its fulness was the meaning of the love of one man for another. This is why he could enter into the spirit of Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' as almost no one else could. His love for his friends was indeed a wonderful, sacred thing, beautiful to see. He felt that it was better not to live than not to love. Love was to him a part of all his being : for in him dwelt 'the strong Son of God, immortal Love,' compelling him to

love his fellow-men. With each new friendship and acquaintance which he made, he saw deeper into the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ. He prayed for those he loved for hours at a time. All his thoughts about some men gradually became prayers."

In these last words is suggested the truest test of human friendship.

He who accepts Christ's ideal of friendship as his own will strive in prayer, even as Christ strove,[1] to help those whom he loves in their struggle against evil. Though he find it difficult to pray for himself he will be forced by his love for his friends to make use, in their behalf, of the greatest power within his reach, the power of intercessory prayer. The word immortality will become to him instinct with new meaning as he realises that friendships begun on earth may be perfected in a life in which the limitations of time shall have disappeared.

We may well believe that it was Christ's personal affection for S. John that transformed the "Son of Thunder" into the Apostle of Love, and which fitted him to write his first Epistle, the keynote of which is the statement, "God is love".

[1] S. Luke xxii. 32.

"*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"[1]

These words have seemed to many to be the most mysterious contained in the Gospel records. Whatever be their interpretation, their insertion in the first two Gospels affords a striking proof of the scrupulous honesty of Christ's biographers. For when they adopted them as part of their record they must have known that it was likely that they would be interpreted by many in a sense wholly different from that in which they would themselves have interpreted them. Had their design been to invent a perfectly heroic character, or to select from authentic history traits of character which might command the admiration of their readers, had their object been anything else than to transmit what they honestly believed to be a true record of facts, this saying would certainly have found no place in their record.

It is natural to compare this saying with the

[1] S. Mark xv. 34.

words attributed to Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane: "If it be possible let this cup pass away from me".[1] Both sayings tend to show that Christ's foresight of the immediate future was limited, and that His potential possession of Divine omniscience did not prevent Him from experiencing to the full the sufferings of a real man. Our knowledge that Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane desired to avoid suffering (should the will of God permit Him to do so) and that in the hour of death He did not maintain unbroken communion with God, brings Him in life and in death very near to us, and creates the assurance that in the crises of our lives and in the hour of our death He can sympathise with us, inasmuch as He was in all points tempted like as we are.

We may go further still and believe that inasmuch as He suffered not only with us but for us none of us will ever be asked to drink of the cup of suffering as deeply as He drank thereof.

Once Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath shaken,
It went up single, echoless—"My God, I am forsaken!"
It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That of the Lost no son should use those words of desolation.[2]

The words uttered by Christ suggest in an acute form the problem which is raised by the

[1] S. Matt. xxvi. 39. [2] E. B. Browning.

apparent non-interference by God with the injustice of men. It is a problem which is raised again and again in the Old Testament. In the case of Abel, Zechariah, Jeremiah and many others the good man suffered, and God apparently failed to intervene or to vindicate His own justice.

Of the difficulties suggested by God's apparent non-interference with evil Faber writes :—

Oh, it is hard to fight for God
To rise and take His part
Upon this battlefield of earth,
And not sometimes lose heart.

He hides Himself so wondrously
As though there were no God;
He is least seen when all the powers
Of ill are most abroad.

Or He deserts us at the hour
The fight is all but lost;
And seems to leave us to ourselves
Just when we need Him most.

The words of the Jewish prophet have found an echo in many hearts, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself".[1]

In the case of Jesus Christ the difficulties raised by the triumph of evil and by God's non-interference with evil were greater than they had

[1] Is. xlv. 15.

been in any previous case. No one had ever served God as He had served Him. Nevertheless He was betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men and suffered death upon the Cross. But at the moment when the difficulties raised by the problem became acute, as never before in human history, the solution of the problem, or at least the direction in which the solution lies, was revealed. The resurrection of Christ was in His case a demonstration that the conquest of good by evil was transitory, whereas good itself was immortal. It was more than this. As we gaze with awe upon the scenes which accompanied His death and interpret His cry in the light of what ensued, we feel that the victory of which it was the prelude is the pledge of a victory which will be granted to countless millions of His followers. His victory was the victory of mankind, and the assurance that His victory may become ours forbids us to despair in the presence of triumphant evil.

The apparent triumphs of evil and the existence of the sufferings of the good, of which the Cross of Christ reminds us, become less completely mysterious when we try to answer the question, What should we be if sin and suffering had never been placed within our reach? Thus Professor Max Müller writes: "We ask why

there should be suffering and sin; we cannot answer the question. Some help our human understanding may find, however, by simply imagining what would have been our life if the power of doing evil had not been given to us. It seems to me that in that case we, human beings as we are, should never have had a conception of what is meant by good; we should have been like the birds in the air, happier, it may be, but better, no. Or if suffering had always been reserved for the bad, we should all have become the most cunning angels."[1]

The actual words used by Christ are a quotation from Psalm xxii. We are told that some of those who stood by the Cross mistook their meaning and imagined that the sufferer was calling for Elias. To Roman soldiers the name of Elias would be unknown, and on the other hand no well-instructed Jew would have failed to recognise the familiar words of the Psalm. Possibly the words were intentionally misconstrued by the Jewish spectators, or they may have been uttered with a Galilean accent which might have been unfamiliar to those resident at Jerusalem.

We shall better understand their significance if we try to grasp what their omission from the Gospel narrative would mean to us now. Sup-

[1] "Life and Letters of F. Max Müller," ii. 86.

pose that it could be shown that these words did not form part of the original narrative, but that they were an unauthorised addition of later time. We should then be left without the assurance that Jesus Christ experienced the greatest trial of faith which His followers can be called upon to endure.

No one pities the Christian martyrs who, strengthened by the uninterrupted assurance of God's presence, suffered and died for their faith. The man who excites our compassion and whose sufferings our own experience enables us to share, is the man who in the hour of mental or physical anguish loses the assurance that God is with him, and after long years in which he has served God with unremitting zeal, is suddenly constrained to believe that the God whom he has served has deserted him.

If these words formed no part of the Gospel narrative, he might be tempted to say, when such an experience befel him, I am tried in a way in which my Master could never have been tried. I have to tread a path in which I can no longer hope to see His footsteps, and which, for ought I know, may end in the darkness of despair.

But, as the case is, the man who, despite his desire to know and live the truth, is confronted by doubts which he cannot solve, and is haunted

by the fear that God has forsaken him in the hour of his utmost need, can read once again the story of his Master's life, and encourage himself with this thought, Jesus Christ experienced the same doubts, and the same temptations, and inasmuch as He also suffered, being tempted, He is able to sympathise with those who walk in darkness and can see no light.

In the lives of most men there have been times when physical pain has overpowered them, when prayer has seemed an impossibility and their only thought has been how to endure the strain, and when the words have risen unconsciously to their lips, "My God, my God, why?"

Or again there have been times when they have been tried by mental suffering, worse than any physical pain, and when their faith in God and in goodness has ebbed low and they have been confronted with the darkness of despair, when hardly knowing whether the Being to whom their appeal was addressed had any real existence they have cried, "My God, my God, why?"

Or, once again, there has been a time in the experience of many when the sorrow which has clouded their vision of God has been caused by a loss which has befallen them. They have

stood by the bedside of the one whom they loved best in the world, and who has been stricken in early youth or in the prime of life by mortal sickness, and as, despite their passionate prayers and strenuous efforts to prevent it, the life has flickered out in their presence, the thought of the dark future on which they were themselves about to enter has wrung from them the cry, "My God, my God, why?"

Or, lastly, there have been times in the experience of some when the greatest of all sorrows has been theirs, when one whom they have loved dearly and for whom they would gladly have sacrificed their lives, has yielded to temptation and abandoned the struggle for purity and goodness, when their prayers to heaven on his behalf have seemed unavailing, and they have been helpless to guide or restrain the one whom they loved, when they have watched the victory of evil, and have been tempted to doubt whether intercessory prayer is of any avail, and have cried in the bitterness of their anguish, "My God, my God, why?"

In hours such as these we do well to recall the sufferings of our Master and to remember that He experienced like sorrows. He drank the cup of physical pain to its bitter dregs, He too experienced a time when God's presence seemed

to have been withdrawn from Him, He too wept in sympathy with the bereavement of one whom He loved, He too failed in His efforts to save from sin and perdition one of His chosen apostles.

The knowledge that Christ experienced the sorrows which befall His followers, does not annihilate these sorrows, but affords assurance to the man who is called to endure them that he is not isolated in his sorrow, and that beyond the darkness which the eye of faith can hardly penetrate he shall one day see God. In union with Christ he will learn

> To feel altho' no tongue can prove,
> That every cloud that spreads above
> And veileth love, itself is love.[1]

[1] Tennyson, "The Two Voices".

"I thirst."[1]

These words were apparently uttered immediately after the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" S. Mark says that after the utterance of the latter words one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave Him to drink, while S. John states that this was done in consequence of the utterance of the words "I thirst". A vessel full of vinegar, or rather sour wine, which was the ordinary drink of the common people, had probably been brought by the soldiers to the spot for their own use, and it was doubtless from this that the sponge was filled. It seems likely that the act of the Roman soldier was prompted by a feeling of humanity, and a desire to lessen the sufferings of Christ.

It is best to interpret this saying as the expression of a natural want rather than to attempt to give to the words a spiritual or metaphorical meaning which they could not have had for

[1] S. John xix. 28.

those who heard them uttered. If they are so interpreted, there is scarcely any saying of Christ which is fraught with richer consolation, for the utterance of these words shows that Christ not only felt human pain, but that He was willing to acknowledge that He felt it, and that He did not think that the expression of bodily suffering was inconsistent with perfect submission to the will of God.

Their occurrence in the Gospel record affords too an incidental proof that the story of Christ is not that of a mythical hero to whom no confession of human weakness would have been attributed.

Had the words "I thirst" not been recorded, the follower of Christ might imagine that the attainment of the Christian ideal must involve disregard of, or even contempt for, physical sufferings. Christ did not teach either by word or example, as some who profess His name teach to-day, that pain is unreal and that it is our duty to deny its existence. On the contrary He felt, and declared that He felt, physical pain. His words cut the ground from under the arguments of the Christian scientist who asserts that the man who has become what God intends him to be, will be able to say, "Physical wants and physical sufferings have for me no meaning".

There are many, too, who are not "Christian

scientists," who misinterpret Christ's attitude towards sickness and suffering. He seldom healed any one unless He was specially asked to do so, and He regarded these acts of healing as a means for imparting spiritual instruction both to those who witnessed them and to the sufferers. One who died after a long and painful illness,[1] in a letter dictated from his deathbed said: "It appears that just as our Lord would not relieve His own suffering by turning stones into bread, so those who were nearest to Him ventured least of all to ask His intervention to relieve themselves. He indeed healed Simon's wife's mother. It was very early in His ministry, before the choosing of the apostles, and even then we are not told that Simon asked for it, but only that, being in the house, He was told of the illness and freely bestowed the blessing. The holy sisters of Bethany, again, obviously felt that He might not be pleased with a direct request. There was suggestion, no doubt, in the message, 'He whom thou lovest is sick,' and afterwards, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died'; but they felt that they must leave the initiative to Him, and they did not know whether He would choose to act or

[1] Bishop Awdry of S. Tokyo.

not. This comes out all the more strikingly when we remember that it was the less spiritually minded of the sisters who carried the suggestion further and almost asked in the words, 'I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee'. Nor is it without significance that it never seems to occur to the apostles, who had just seen Him of His own accord miraculously supply the hunger of thousands, that they might ask Him to relieve them of the consequences of their forgetfulness when they had taken with them only one loaf. It seems to me very clear that the nearer men were to Him, and the more perfectly they reflected His mind, the less they would ask for His special intervention to make their own lives easier."

Had Christ regarded physical suffering from the point of view of the "Christian scientist," He would have hastened to remove it from the lives of those whom He specially loved.

The sufferings which He Himself endured do not solve for us the problem of the existence of pain, but they teach us that the solution of the problem is not to be found in the denial of its reality. The realisation of the fruitfulness of the sufferings of "the first-born of all creation"[1]

[1] Col. i. 15.

renders it possible for us to hope that it will one day be shown that no sentient life upon this earth has ever been subjected to purposeless pain,

> That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain.[1]

In the case of the individual from whom physical pain has wrung an expression of anguish and an appeal for relief, and whom suffering has rendered incapable of prayer or of conscious communion with God, the knowledge that Christ appealed for the relief of His suffering will enable him to look beyond his momentary pains to the time when he, like his Saviour, shall have "learned obedience by the things which he suffered and (shall have) been made perfect".[2]

Christ's appeal to those who stood by the Cross for the relief of His dying thirst recalls the words which He declared that, as the Judge of mankind, He would one day utter to those who had been His disciples, "I was thirsty and ye gave me drink," followed as they were by His interpretation of their meaning, "Inasmuch as ye

[1] "In Memoriam," liv. [2] Heb. v. 8.

did it unto one of these, my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me".[1]

There are none who commemorate year by year the Passion of Jesus Christ who would not consider it a high privilege to have offered to them the opportunity for ministering to His wants which was afforded to the soldier who responded to the cry, "I thirst". But, as the concluding words of the parable suggest, opportunities which closely resemble the opportunity that was given to this soldier are being constantly presented to men. Those who have ears to listen may hear the Saviour's cry repeated in the wants and sufferings of those around them. Every call to sacrifice their own ease in order to sympathise with the pains and sufferings of others is a call to respond to His cry "I thirst". And if the echo of that cry reaches us from the lips of sufferers in our own country, it reaches us too from those in distant lands who are suffering and dying unsustained by the knowledge of Divine love.

Those who recognise in the sufferings and wants of non-Christian races the echo of their Master's cry upon the Cross will count it their highest privilege to sacrifice everything which they possess, if by doing so they may help to bring those who have never heard of their Saviour's

[1] S. Matt. xxv. 35, 40.

love to the foot of His Cross; they will long to create within them the consciousness of a need which will lead them to respond to the invitation, "He that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely".[1] The commemoration of Good Friday is inseparably connected with the recognition and fulfilment of the missionary obligation. That Good Friday is the day above all others in the year on which the thought of missions should dominate the minds of Christians is suggested by the fact that the only collect on behalf of foreign missions contained in the Prayer Book is appointed to be said on this day. After praying that God will graciously behold His "family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented . . . to suffer death upon the Cross," we are asked to pray that He will have mercy upon all Jews, Mohammedans and unbelievers, and that He will take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart and contempt of His holy Word and fetch them home to His flock.

There can be no more fitting commemoration of the sufferings which Jesus Christ endured on the first Good Friday than that which issues in the resolve to make response to the deep but unexpressed needs of the non-Christian world.

[1] Rev. xxii. 17.

He who recognises in the needs of others the dying appeal of his crucified Lord, and who devotes his life or substance to their service, may look forward to the time when the words shall sound in his ears, "Come ye blessed of my Father, for I was thirsty and ye gave me drink".

"*It is finished.*" [1]

Of no other words that were ever spoken has their interpretation by subsequent ages differed more from that which must have been given to them by those who heard them uttered. The bystanders would probably have understood them as an expression of relief that the angel of death was about to put an end to His sufferings. Interpreted, however, in the light of subsequent history, how far-reaching was their import!

To S. John, who alone records them, they would have recalled the words which his Master had uttered on the previous night: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," [2] and the words which he also records, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work". [3]

Christ's death upon the Cross was the end and completion of a life of unrecognised self-sacrifice and of effort for the good of others, but it was more than this. It was a definite victory over

[1] S. John xix. 30. [2] S. John xvii. 4 (A.V.).
[3] S. John iv. 34 (A.V.).

evil and a reinforcement of the powers of good which have been reproduced in the experience of myriads of men who have since lived and died. Those who profess to be followers of Christ today interpret in different ways the atonement which He accomplished by His death, but they are united in the belief that the work which He came into the world to do, and which He consummated upon the Cross, has rendered it possible for every other member of the human race to obtain the assurance of sin forgiven and to secure in increasing measure victory over his own sin and selfishness.

The finished work of Christ was a demonstration to all who had eyes to see that the issue of the conflict which man has been waging against his own lower self ever since he became a conscious being has been decided, and that although the fight will go on as long as the human race continues, the decisive battle in the long campaign has been fought and won.

When General Wolfe was lying mortally wounded at the siege of Quebec, news was brought to him that a critical charge, which he had ordered to be made, had proved successful. His dying words, addressed to those to whom the news had just been imparted, were: "The victory is ours: Oh, keep it". Christ's dying

words, "It is finished," may be interpreted as containing an assurance of triumph for all time and over all forms of evil. In the light of His Cross we may say, "The victory is ours: Oh, let us keep it".

God who had of old time spoken "by divers portions and in divers manners,"[1] who had revealed Himself according as the nations of the world were prepared to receive His revelation through the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and through the highest conceptions and ideals of heathenism, has, in the person of His Son, given to the world His final revelation of Himself, a revelation which could be summed up in the one word Love. Christ had declared that to lay down his life for his friends was the greatest proof of love which any man could give, and His dying words, "It is finished," proclaim that this, the highest proof of love, had been given to the world.

We can conceive of no revelation which could supersede that which was finished when Christ died upon the Cross. To the Christian Church is committed the task of reflecting this love upon the world and of bringing its influence to bear upon those whose knowledge of God has been derived from the partial and temporary revelation

[1] Heb. i. 1.

of Divine truth which is contained in all other forms of religion.

It is because self-sacrificing love is the highest attribute that we can discover in human nature, and is therefore the highest attribute that we can predicate of God, that we can dare to say that He who has perfectly revealed the self-sacrificing love of God to men, has given to the world its final faith, which no heaven-sent teacher can ever supersede. There is no higher truth than that which is expressed in the words of S. John, "God is love".[1] In whatever way we interpret the atonement which was consummated upon the Cross, the message which the death of Christ conveyed was the message that God loved man with so immeasurable a love that by an act of personal sacrifice He has removed the obstacles which man's sin had placed between him and his God, and has made it possible for him to draw near to, nay, to become like, Himself.

The words "It is finished" may serve to remind the disciple of Christ of the goal to which his present life is tending. With what meaning will he be able to use the dying words of his Master when his own life comes to its close? What for him will then be finished? Will it be a life spent in a successful effort to

[1] 1 John iv. 8, 16.

acquire riches, pleasure and honour, or will it be a life in which he has denied himself and taken up his cross daily and followed in the steps of his Saviour, a life at the close of which, despite its manifest imperfections, the words of his Master will have for him a real meaning, "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do". The way of the Cross seems long and arduous now, but how different will it seem when looked back upon from its close. How easy would it be for the disciple of Christ to bear his daily cross with patience if he could anticipate the goal whither he is carrying it.

If impatient thou let slip thy cross
Thou wilt not find it in this world again.
Canst thou not suffer then one hour or two?
If He should call thee from thy cross to-day,
Saying *It is finished*—that hard cross of thine
From which thou prayest for deliverance,
Thinkest thou not some passion of regret
Would overcome thee? Thou wouldst say, "So soon?
Let me go back, and suffer yet awhile
More patiently;—I have not yet praised God."
And He might answer to thee—"Never more,
All pain is done with". Whensoe'er it comes,
That summons that we look for, it will seem
Soon, yea too soon.[1]

[1] "The Disciples," by H. E. King.

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."[1]

The last utterance upon the Cross was expressed in the words of the Psalmist,[2] but with one significant alteration. The Psalmist wrote: "Into thine hand I commend my spirit . . . O Lord, thou God of truth". The title by which Jesus Christ addressed God in His first and last utterance upon the Cross was that which He had taught His disciples to use when they prayed to God—Father. This dying utterance of their Saviour formed the last words of Polycarp, Caedmon, Bernard, Huss, Luther, Melancthon, and many others of His followers.

The loud cry which immediately preceded Christ's death, and which, as S. Mark states, specially impressed the Centurion, seems to indicate that the act of dying was a voluntary act and was not simply a result of the exhaustion of natural forces.

We are reminded of His words: "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 46. [2] Ps. xxxi. 5.

it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again."[1] In the language of an early Christian hymn, death did not approach Christ but He approached death.[2] With this thought of the voluntary nature of Christ's death agrees the language of S. John, "He bowed his head and gave up his spirit".[3]

Death was to Jesus Christ no King of terrors, but it was rather the laying aside of the limitations of earthly life and the removal of all that interfered with perfect intercourse with His Father in heaven. To those who have learned the lessons which His life and death teach, death should be welcome and free from terror even as it was for Him. They may await death with eager expectation and joy, inasmuch as for them

> The face of Death is toward the Sun of Life,
> His shadow darkens earth, his truer name
> Is "Onward," no discordance in the roll
> And march of that eternal Harmony
> Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly heard,
> Until the great Hereafter.[4]

[1] S. John x. 17 f.

[2] "En pessima, non tu
Pervenis ad Christum, sed Christus pervenit ad te,
Cui licuit sine morte mori" (Sedulius).

[3] xix. 30.

[4] Tennyson, "The Death of the Duke of Clarence",

Unnumbered multitudes who have recognised in Jesus Christ their Saviour and Redeemer have learned from Him to die. They have learned to believe that with God "do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord," and that "the souls of the faithful after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity".

The events which occurred in Jerusalem on the first Good Friday have a significance which, we cannot but believe, extends far beyond the limits of this world. The question has sometimes been asked by those who have thought only of men as individual units and have forgotten the relation in which they stand to God's universe, Why, if God be omnipotent, could He not have effected man's redemption at a less cost to Himself than that which was involved in the death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross? Our imagination may help us to conceive an answer which might be given to this question.

The atlas of the heavens which by the combined aid of camera and telescope has been in course of construction for many years, will, it is anticipated, reveal the existence of at least four thousand million worlds nearly all of which are larger than this earth, and several astronomers have maintained that many of these worlds are fit

for the habitation of beings not unlike men. Let us try to conceive that Jesus Christ had not become incarnate and suffered and died, but that God had overlooked the sin and sinfulness of the human race and had received men back to Himself without any act of redemption. When the story of this earth reached, as it will one day reach, the uttermost bounds of the universe and the inhabitants of God's other worlds heard that those who had lived upon this earth had sinned against Him, but that nothing had happened, and the relationship in which they stood towards God had remained unaltered, what would be the inevitable effect upon the other inhabitants of the universe? Would it not be that their thoughts of God and their understanding of His character would be subverted and that the very throne of the righteous Judge of all would rock upon its base?

To turn, however, from what we can conceive might have occurred to what has actually happened—when the story of this earth becomes known throughout the universe and the inhabitants of other worlds learn that in order to redeem men from their sin it was necessary that the very Son of God Himself should become a man and suffer and die upon the earth, will it not be the case that an anthem of adoring praise will ascend to the throne of God, not only from

the race of men whom He has redeemed, but from all who shall hear the story of the earth, and that the heinousness of sin and the power of Divine love will be made manifest to all.

There is only one answer that we can give to the question, Which would most enhance the glory of God and the welfare of His universe, a world which had retained its primæval innocence, or a world which had sinned, but which had been redeemed from its sin and won back to God by an exhibition of omnipotent love? A redeemed world will be an object-lesson to all of the heinousness of sin, of the majesty of law and of the might of Divine love. The message which the story of the earth will have to give to the remotest bounds of the universe will be, "All's love, yet all's law".[1]

The keynote of the Christian faith which distinguishes it from all other faiths, which have been preached before or since, is the redemption of the human race by the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Christianity was described by the greatest student of non-Christian religions in modern times—Professor Max Müller—as "the religion of the Redeemer". In the course of a letter written towards the end of his life, he says: "How shall I describe to you what I found in the New Testament? I had not read it for many

[1] Browning, "Saul" xvii. 5.

years, and was prejudiced against it before I took it in hand. The light which struck Paul with blindness on his way to Damascus was not more strange than that which fell on me when I suddenly discovered the fulfilment of all hopes, the highest perfection of philosophy, the key to all the seeming contradictions of the physical and moral world. The whole world seemed to me to be ordered for the sole purpose of furthering the religion of the Redeemer, and if this religion is not divine, I understand nothing at all. In all my studies of the ancient times I have always felt the want of something, and it was not until I knew our Lord that all was clear to me. With Him there is nothing I am unable to solve, and yet there are some people who push the New Testament aside as if it had no message for them."[1]

In these last words Max Müller has described the real tragedy which is emphasised and repeated as Good Friday receives its annual commemoration. The greatest tragedy which this earth has witnessed was not the death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. The tragedy of tragedies is, that after this supreme manifestation of the love of God to men, "there are some people who push the New Testament aside as if it had no message for them".

[1] *Cf.* "Messiah, the Hope of the Ages," by E. A. Gordon, p. 110.

III.

CHRIST'S LEGACY OF LOVE.

MICHEL ANGELO, when in the act of dying, said to his attendants, "In your passage through this world remember the sufferings of Jesus Christ". A chief object of dwelling upon the sufferings of Christ, is that we may be brought into such sympathetic contact with Him that in our passage through this world the ideals which were His may become ours and that His character may be reproduced in us. There are four attributes of the character of Christ referred to by S. John in chapters xiii. to xvii. which our Lord anticipated would be reproduced in His disciples after His approaching departure from them. These are love, joy, peace, and humility. Christ desired and anticipated that His love, His joy, and His peace would be shared by His disciples, and in the scene which occurred on the Thursday night, after giving them an object-lesson of humility, He said, "I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done to you".[1]

[1] S. John xiii. 15.

Christ anticipated that His love would be reproduced in the lives and characters of His followers. His last recorded words spoken just before He entered the Garden of Gethsemane were: "I made known unto them thy name and will make it known, that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them".[1] The development of love in His disciples was regarded by our Lord as a paramount necessity. When asked which was the greatest commandment of the law, He replied that the first commandment and the second were to love, and on several different occasions He taught that without love the service of God and of man were alike impossible. The negative side of the same truth is expressed in the words of the disciple whom Jesus loved, who wrote: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen".[2]

> He who shuts Love out, in turn shall be
> Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
> Howling in utter darkness.[3]

There is no higher ideal which a man can place before himself than the reproduction of the love of Jesus Christ. The task will appear less

[1] S. John xvii. 26. [2] 1 John iv. 20.
[3] Tennyson, Introduction to the "Palace of Art".

completely beyond his reach if, instead of thinking of love as an abstract quality, he fixes his attention upon the particular manifestation of love to which men give the name of sympathy. To gain any adequate conception of the sympathy of Christ it is necessary to read the Gospels through with this special thought in our minds. We need to dwell in turn upon each incident which they record in which His sympathy for individuals or for the multitude was manifested, not merely by the exercise of miraculous power on their behalf, but by His forethought and consideration of their needs.

More than one of Christ's sayings such as "the hour cometh and now is . . ." suggest that He regarded time even as His Father in heaven regards it, with whom time is an eternal now. But His vivid anticipation of a glorious future did not prevent or diminish this sympathy with those from whom this vision was withheld. The tears which fell from His eyes at the grave of Lazarus and which drew from the bystanders the exclamation, "Behold how he loved him," were shed by one who knew that their sorrow was almost immediately to give place to joy, but whose sympathetic grief none the less found vent in human tears.

He who was "touched with the feeling of

our infirmities,"[1] did not stand beside the sick and suffering and tell them that they should forget their temporary pains and fix their thoughts upon a bright future. His sympathy for their sorrows prompted Him to take immediate action for their relief. His compassion for the multitude,[2] moreover, did not interfere with His sympathetic love for individuals. Of one who went away from His presence sorrowful because the self-sacrifice demanded of him was more than he was prepared to make, S. Mark says, "Jesus looking upon him loved him".[3] His love for one of His apostles, perhaps the youngest of their number, emboldened him to speak of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

His sympathetic love for another of His apostles was shown by His intercessory prayers on his behalf, by warning him of his approaching denial, by His repeated injunction to watch and pray, by His look of compassion which brought him to repentance, and by His threefold question which gave him the opportunity to declare his passionate devotion and was at the same time the pledge of his forgiveness.[4]

His compassionate love for yet another of His

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

[2] S. Matt. ix. 36, xiv. 14. S. Mark viii. 2. [3] x. 21.

[4] Further illustrations of the loving sympathy of Christ are given in "Studies in the Character of Christ," pp. 20-23.

apostles in whom there could have been little to attract was shown by His repeated efforts to let Judas Iscariot know that He Himself knew of his projected treachery, without at the same time exposing him to the contempt and hatred of his fellow-disciples, and by the last supreme effort which He made to open for him a way for repentance ere his treachery should be complete.

The sympathy which Jesus Christ gave to men He asked from them in return. There is no scene recorded in the Gospels which equals in pathos that in which, after appealing to His three most intimate friends to watch and pray with Him in the supreme moment of His struggle with the powers of evil, He came back to find them asleep. His words addressed to S. Peter suggest at once His yearning for the support which their sympathy might have given Him, and His disappointment that it had been withheld: "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?"[1]

It is one thing for a man to recognise the fact that love and sympathy became incarnate in Jesus Christ, it is quite another to apprehend the means by which His love and sympathy may be reproduced in his own life. Could we have put this latter question to the man who,

[1] S. Matt. xxvi. 40.

we may venture to say, understood his Master's character better than any one else who has lived, there can be no doubt as to the answer which we should have received. He would have said to us, as he said to those to whom he wrote his first Epistle, "We love, because he first loved us".[1] Notice the change in the words which the Revised Version has introduced. S. John does not simply say, "We love him," but, "We love, because he first loved us". It is as though he had said, The knowledge of the love of God is the cause and origin of love in the widest sense of the word, whether of love to God or love to man.

No religion other than Christianity has demanded of its adherents that they should love God with their whole hearts and should love men irrespective of race and disposition. Nor has any other religion provided a motive power which could strengthen men to accomplish this task.

The motive power which can enable the Christian to fulfil this demand is contained in the brief sentence of S. John in which at the close of his long life he summed up his interpretation of the revelation which he believed to have been made by God in Christ, "God is love".

[1] 1 John iv. 19.

His words sound so familiar that they seem to be hardly more than the expression of a truism. But though they were some of the first which we learned to repeat, as soon as we were able to understand anything about God or religion, they are words which those who have meditated longest upon their meaning have hardly yet begun to comprehend. For the Bible contains no more wonderful, or completely new revelation than that expressed by these three words. S. John does not say, as the Psalmist had said long before, that God is loving unto Israel, nor does he say, as Psalmists and non-Christian teachers had dimly discerned, that God is loving unto all men. These statements might have given to men the assurance that one of God's attributes was love. But however fully they might have believed this, they might still have supposed that God's love was contingent upon conditions, either in themselves or in the universe, which might alter, contingent perhaps upon their own actions, or upon their changeful feelings. But the statement of S. John is more wonderful than this. He tells us that God not only loves, but is love. Love is His essential nature which cannot alter. To know the meaning of love therefore is to understand the nature of God, and "he that loveth not, knoweth not God". The man

who believes that "God is love," believes that the power which controls the universe, and will evermore control human life, is love. He can enter into the meaning of the words of a modern poet[1] :—

I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet,
In lane, highway, or open street,
That he and we and all men live
Under a canopy of love;
As wide as the blue sky above.

And, ere thou leave him, say thou this,
Yet one word more, they only miss
The winning of that final bliss,
Who will not count it true that Love,
Blessing, not cursing, rules above,
And that in it we live and move.

Love was the great central lesson taught by the Incarnation. God taught men this lesson, not by explaining to them the apparent contradictions involved in the existence of sin and misery, but by clothing suffering with Himself. He took human sorrow and suffering and connected them for ever with love.

Had an angel come into the world and assured men that God is love, and worked miracles in order to prove the truth of his words, they might

[1] Archbishop Trench.

still have said: "It is impossible to believe this to be true, for if an omnipotent God loved man He would not permit suffering to continue". But when Love became incarnate and dwelt upon earth in closest union with suffering, the difficulty of believing in the existence of Divine Love ceased to be insuperable. Though the mystery of suffering remains, its existence is no longer irreconcilable with a belief that Love is the power which rules the world. The life and death of Jesus Christ were at once a demonstration of Divine Love and the source from which the best and noblest human love has come. Man's capacity for giving to God and to his fellow-man the highest love of which human nature is capable is proportionate to his belief that he is himself the object of Divine Love. As we follow our Master from one scene to another during His last week upon earth, and stand at length beneath His Cross to gaze with reverent eyes upon the victory of Love, the statement of S. John will obtain a fresh fulfilment in our own experience, "We love, because he first loved us".

If any one has a piece of steel to which he desires to give the power of attracting other pieces, he will bring it into contact with a magnet, and ere long it will become itself magnetised. Contact with Jesus Christ who was lifted up that He

might draw all men unto Himself can alone galvanise human hearts and render it possible for any one to exert an attractive force upon others. He who allows the thought of Christ's love to dominate his thoughts and to permeate his being will discover that the power to love has become his. Love is at once the highest faculty which man possesses and the key to the mystery of his existence. Browning represents S. John, as he lay dying in the desert, looking back upon the time when he had lived with incarnate Love and interpreting the purposes of human life thus :—

> . . . Life, with all it yields of joy and woe
> And hope and fear,
> Is just our chance of the prize of learning love,
> How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.

To those who accept Jesus Christ as their exemplar the obligation to love can admit of no limitation. "Love," said Christ to His disciples, "as I have loved." It was because S. Paul had apprehended the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, that he was able to love his fellow-men as brothers, and to exert a constraining influence upon the men of different countries, languages and temperaments with whom he came in contact. He who would imitate S. Paul, even as he imitated Christ, must seek to acquire the same love. Love is a force

which can transmute toil into pleasure and which can lighten the heaviest cross. A Chinese speaker at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference described a scene which occurred in his own country. A little girl was struggling along with a boy nearly as big as herself tied on to her back. A stranger who was passing remarked: "You have a big burden". "No," was her reply, "that is not a burden, that is my brother." The principle which the story illustrates is one of universal application. Nothing is difficult for a man to attempt on behalf of one whom he really loves. In proportion as men learn to fulfil the command "Love as brethren,"[1] will they find it easy to fulfil the further command, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ".[2] The one thing needed, and without which it is impossible for any one to help another, is love.

A study of S. Paul's missionary labours will afford illustration of this truth. What was the secret of the power which he possessed, and which made him the most successful missionary the world has seen? What was it which rendered it possible for him to appeal in turn to Jews, Greeks, Romans, and barbarians; which enabled him to enter a strange town where the sight of a Jew would excite repugnance or

[1] 1 Peter iii. 8 (A.V.). [2] Gal. vi. 2.

derision, and after a few months, or even a few weeks, to leave behind him a body of men and women whose subsequent life showed that their characters had been transformed by the message which he had delivered to them?

We may take as an example his visit to the town of Thessalonica, or Salonika, as it is now called. After being shamefully entreated at another town he arrived there as a stranger without any introductions and remained there altogether three weeks. Those to whom he desired to appeal must have looked upon him, when he first attracted their attention, as a disturber of the social order, or, at best, as a fanatical preacher of a harmless superstition. Nevertheless within three weeks from the time that he entered their city they accepted his message and the obligations which it involved, and became imitators of him[1] and of his Master, who, but a few years before, had died the death of a felon. That which happened at Thessalonica, happened again and again in Europe and in Asia.

The experience of other successful teachers of a new faith such as Gautama or Mohammed, affords no real parallel. Both of these preached to their own countrymen, neither of them delivered a message the acceptance of which in-

[1] 1 Thess. i. 6, "Ye became imitators of us and of the Lord".

volved a complete moral transformation; nor had they the initial prejudices on the part of their hearers to overcome with which S. Paul was confronted.

What then was S. Paul's secret?

The secret of his success at Thessalonica, which was the secret of his success everywhere, may be inferred from the words contained in a letter which he subsequently wrote to the Christians in this town. He wrote: "We were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children; even so being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us . . . ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you".[1]

Those to whom S. Paul appealed at Thessalonica realised that a man had entered their city who was consumed by an unselfish desire to make their lives better and happier, a desire which could only be described by comparing it with the love of a father for his children. In the presence of this love their prejudices melted away and their hearts were prepared to receive the influence of Divine love.

[1] 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8, 11.

Many a man, however, who has read the story of S. Paul's life has felt inclined to say: "His experience does not help me much. I am not by nature sympathetic. There are people with whom it is impossible for me to sympathise, and their number includes many of those with whom I am brought into daily contact. I cannot control my feelings, nor can I create love for those for whom I have no natural affinity. What I need to know is not what influence I might exert if I possessed the power of sympathy which S. Paul possessed, but how can I hope to acquire this power?" It will be less difficult to answer these questions if we consider what clue S. Paul's letters afford as to the means whereby his sympathy was at once developed and made effective.

Apart from the statements of doctrine which S. Paul's letters contain, their most striking feature is the prominence which they give to his practice of intercessory prayer. The letters are full of prayers, which in some cases were offered on behalf of men and women whom he had never seen. It is impossible for any one to read them without realising that his power of sympathy was inseparably connected with this practice of intercession. It was by praying for those whom he desired to influence that he learned to

love them. During his later years, when he was debarred from public preaching, intercessory prayer afforded to him his chief means of influencing others. His experience has been repeated in the life and experience of all who have exerted a wide and lasting missionary influence. He who would gain for himself the Christ-like love which S. Paul acquired, can best hope to do so by adopting his methods. Though he cannot control his feelings, he can control his prayers, and his power to sympathise with others will be proportionate to the efforts which he is prepared to make to pray for them. To influence he must love, to love he must pray. Love and sympathy are born of intercessory prayer. Our first and greatest obligation towards those with whom we are brought into contact is to pray for them. Christ's love for His disciples led to His spending long nights in prayer on their behalf.

If we test the love which we bear to our friends by the length of time that we are willing to spend in praying for them, we shall realise how far we fall below the standard contained in the words, "Love one another as I have loved you".

The experience of those who have acquired the power of intercessory prayer in a special

degree suggests that in the busiest lives there are opportunities which can be utilised by any one whose love for his friends is sufficient to make him desire to pray for them. It is difficult, but it is far from being impossible, to form the habit of praying for others whilst walking along the street or waiting at a station. In proportion as a man believes that he can help those whom he desires to serve by his prayers, weak, cold and interrupted as they may be, more effectively than by any other means, will he make the effort which is required to translate his love for them into prayer. He who has appropriated for himself Christ's legacy of love, and is prepared to fulfil the obligations which His love imposes, will admit no excuse for intermitting prayer for others, nor be content till intercessory prayer has become the habit of his life, as truly as it was that of his Master's life. Love and intercessory prayer are inseparably connected, and each in turn tends to strengthen and develop the other.

To understand the love of Christ is to accept as the supreme purpose of life the reflection of His love upon the world around. To understand the love of Christ is to forget and thereby to overcome selfishness. The love of God revealed in Christ opens out before us an

illimitable vista, at the same time that it imposes an illimitable obligation. Each time that we commemorate afresh the passion and death of our Saviour the vista becomes more distinct and the obligation to interpret it to others increases. The ideal which S. Paul set before the Christians at Ephesus was expressed in the words of his prayer that they "being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge". The complete attainment of this ideal is beyond our present reach, but the reverent contemplation of the love of Christ as we commemorate His death from year to year, should render the ideal less and less unapproachable and should quicken our anticipation of that future which awaits us, when

> . . . in the ocean of His love
> We lose ourselves in heaven above.

IV.

CHRIST'S LEGACY OF JOY.

We are accustomed to speak of Jesus Christ as the Man of Sorrows, and love to think of Him as of One who, through personal acquaintance with human grief, has come very near to ourselves; nevertheless we cannot doubt that His life was the happiest life which has ever been lived on this earth. The river of abounding happiness which must have characterised the years of His sinless childhood, did not cease to flow when He began His public life. The consciousness of God's presence with Him by day and by night, the certain knowledge that His purposes of love would one day be completely accomplished and that good would finally triumph over evil, and the entire absence of selfish ambition, must have produced within Him a ceaseless joy. The one occasion on which we are expressly told that He rejoiced when the seventy disciples returned to tell Him of the success of their mission,[1] must

[1] S. Luke x. 21.

have been typical of many others. If, as He said, the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner repenteth, what joy must have been His as He saw one and another who had been influenced by His teaching and example, turning from sin and endeavouring to lead a new life. We do well to think of Jesus Christ as sharing in the sorrows of others, but it is equally true to say that He shared in their joys, and that their joys must from time to time have increased His own happiness. It is only selfishness which prevents any man from tasting the cup of happiness which others drink and from sharing equally with them in all their joys. To be perfectly unselfish is to be perfectly happy, and the happiness which comes from complete unselfishness was His throughout His whole life.

Varro, a Roman writer who lived about 30 B.C., wrote a book in which he enumerated 288 different ways by which, as he thought, happiness might be successfully sought. The reason why his book failed to increase the happiness of the world was that his enumeration was based upon the assumption that a man can secure happiness by a direct effort to attain it. Christ's life was perfectly happy because He did not seek His own happiness. His joy was the joy of self-sacrificing love, which is the greatest joy of which earth can

conceive and which heaven can provide. It is this joy which He left as a legacy to His Church, and to which He referred when He said: "These things have I spoken unto you that *my joy* may be in you and that your joy may be fulfilled," and again, "These things I speak in the world that they may have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves".[1] This joy of self-sacrifice thrilled the heart of the great Indian missionary, Francis Xavier, when he wrote from South India to his society at home :—

"I have nothing more to tell you except that so great is the intensity and abundance of the joy which God is accustomed to bestow upon those workmen in His vineyard who labour diligently in cultivating this barbarous part of the same, that, for my part, I do really believe that if there is in this life any true and solid happiness it is here."

In view of the fact that Christ bequeathed His own joy to His disciples and that the validity of the legacy has been established by the experience of many whose outward circumstances, as in the case of S. Francis Xavier, contributed nothing towards their happiness, it follows that every one whose life accords with his Master's intention must regard joy not only as a privilege but as a duty.

[1] S. John xv. 11, xvii. 13.

How far Christ's intention that His disciples should inherit His joy has failed of its fulfilment may be seen from the fact that one of the commonest objections which the young entertain towards religion is that it tends to make its professors less happy than they might otherwise be.

The boy who said, "Father, I think Mr. So-and-So must be a very good man because he looks so miserable," is a representative of a large number. There walk along the world's highway two bright angels, they walk hand-in-hand and their path is ever upward towards the gates of light: the name of the one is Joy and the name of the other is Unselfishness. Beneath them there walk two dark fiends, they walk hand-in-hand and their path is ever downward towards the region of despair: the name of the one is Misery and the name of the other is Selfishness: and the devil's lie, which not a few professing Christians endorse, is that the bright angel of Joy has left the side of the angel of Unselfishness and has gone down to join hands with the dark fiend of Selfishness, and that the dark fiend of Misery has left its companion to come up and join hands with the bright angel of Unselfishness. It is incumbent upon every disciple of Christ to see that his life gives no countenance to the lie

that selfishness is related to happiness or unselfishness to misery.

In seeking an answer to the question, How may any one secure for himself the legacy of joy which Christ has bequeathed to him? it may be well to consider two special aspects of the joy which Christ Himself possessed.

1. The joy which He possessed was closely connected with His confident anticipation of what the future held in store. We gather from many passages in the Gospels that the glorious future which Christ believed to be in store for Himself and for others was constantly present to His mind. When the seventy told Him with joy of the victory which they had won over the powers of evil in His name, He reminded them that the knowledge that their names were written in heaven should be to them a cause for still greater rejoicing. His anticipation of approaching triumph was so keen that in the very moment of apparent defeat He could say to His disciples, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world".[1]

He then who would enter into the joy of His Lord here and now, must learn to share His anticipation of the future. Joy is the offspring of hope. Thus S. Paul, writing to the Christians at

[1] S. John xvi. 33.

Rome, prays that the God of hope would fill them with all joy.[1] It has been urged by some that the anticipation of future happiness is an unworthy motive to put forward as an inducement for self-sacrifice in the present. If the expectation of future happiness were put forward as a bribe or as compensation for what a man is invited to sacrifice in the present, the objection would hold good, but this would not be the case if his object in trying to realise to himself the future which awaits him be to encourage himself in pursuing the course which he has already entered.

No critic has ever thought of suggesting that the governing motive of Christ's life was the desire to increase His own happiness. Nevertheless the New Testament writer who describes the motive of His self-sacrifice in the words of the Psalmist, "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God," tells us also that Jesus ". . . for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God".[2] Inasmuch as the happiness which awaits the follower of Christ in the future cannot be weighed in the balances of earth, and can only be enjoyed by him whose will has been brought into harmony

[1] Chap. xv. 13. [2] Heb. x. 7, xii. 2.

with the will of God, it is impossible that its anticipation should ever become to him an unworthy motive for action.

Soon after Christian and his companion had escaped from Doubting Castle, says John Bunyan, they left behind them the territory over which Giant Despair held sway, and arrived at certain mountains where were shepherds who showed them the wonders of the place. At length they "had a desire to go forward, and the shepherds had a desire they should; so they walked together towards the end of the mountains. Then said the shepherds one to another: Let us here show the pilgrims the gates of the Celestial City, if they have skill to look through our perspective glass. The pilgrims then lovingly accepted the motion: so they had them to the top of a hill called Clear and gave them the glass to look. Then they essayed to look, but their hands did shake, by means of which impediment they could not look steadily through the glass, yet they thought they saw something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place."

It is no unique or imaginary experience which John Bunyan has here described. Doubting Castle with its gloomy dungeons still stands, Giant Despair is not dead but is still on the watch to intercept those who have laid the load

of their sins before the Cross of Christ and have progressed far upon their way towards the Celestial City, but who through ignorance or carelessness have ceased to watch and pray.

We have need to follow the example of Christian and, having escaped from Doubting Castle by the exercise of prayer and by the appropriation of divine promises, to ascend into a higher and purer atmosphere and to raise, even if it be with trembling hands, the perspective glass of hope wherewith we may be able to anticipate something of the glorious future which awaits us. And although

> We cannot on the mount remain
> Life's tumult we must meet again,

nevertheless when our vision of the future fades into the light of common day, we shall carry with us along the dusty road of our daily life, as Christian and his companion carried with them, a measure of the joy to which hope has given birth.

2. But if Christ's joy was in part the outcome of His confident anticipation of a glorious future, it was also inseparably connected with His constant practice of praise and thanksgiving. The words, "He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit," are followed immediately by, "I thank thee, O

Father".[1] The announcement of the birth of Christ made by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem and of the tidings of great joy for all mankind are followed by the sound of voices praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest". If it be true that joy begets praise, it is also true that praise is the parent of joy. The two are inseparably connected, nor is it possible to acquire one without the other. The connection between them is equally clear when we pass from the life of Christ to that of His earliest disciples. Two prominent characteristics of S. Paul's life may be expressed in words used by himself, "alway rejoicing"[2] and "giving thanks always for all things".[3] His exhortation to the Christians at Thessalonica to "rejoice alway"[4] is followed by the words "in everything give thanks". We need to read through his epistles in order to realise how constantly the subject of praise and thanksgiving recurs in them, and how strongly he believed that upon the heathen as well as upon the Christian rested an obligation to cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving.[5]

Jesus Christ brought hope and joy to a despairing world.

[1] S. Luke x. 21.
[2] 2 Cor. vi. 10.
[3] Ephes. v. 20.
[4] 1 Thess. v. 16, 18.
[5] For a further development of this thought, see "Studies in Christian Worship," pp. 43-45.

At the time when Christ was teaching in Palestine the high-priest of the religion of Rome, who was regarded by a large part of mankind as a god, was one whom a Roman historian described as "the saddest of men".[1]

The enjoyment of every luxury which earth could provide and imagination suggest and the homage of suppliant millions of his fellow-men failed to give to the Emperor Tiberius the happiness which, before he died, had become the possession of the humblest Christian to whom had come the tidings of great joy which had been brought to the earth by its angel visitors. The experience of the inhabitants of Samaria of whom we read, "There was much joy in that city,"[2] was the normal experience of those who first received the message of Christianity.

We shall understand better the nature of the joy which filled the hearts of Christ's earliest disciples, if we notice carefully the grounds of comfort which He put before them at a time when sorrow had filled their hearts.[3]

The apostles had just realised that their

[1] Pliny, H. N., xxviii. 5 : "tristissimus ut constat hominum" ; *cf.* also Tacitus, "Ann.," vi. 6 : "Quippe Tiberium non fortuna, non sollitudines protegebant quin tormenta pectoris suasque ipse poenas fateretur".

[2] Acts viii, 8. [3] S. John xvi. 6.

Master was going to leave them. He had been telling them this for weeks past, but they had failed to understand. We can sympathise with their reluctance to believe what He had told them. The one good man whom they had known, the strong man on whom they had learned to rely, the leader who had never failed them, the teacher who had borne so patiently with them and had brought out all that was best in their natures, He whom they had learned to love as man and were beginning to recognise as Divine, was about to leave them. It is always hard to say a last goodbye to one whom we love, and in the case of the apostles their sorrow was enhanced by the solemn words of their Master, "Whither I go ye cannot come".[1] What then was the comfort which Christ offered to His apostles in the crisis of their grief caused by the knowledge of His approaching departure. It was expressed in the words: "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go I will send Him unto you".[2] To understand the meaning of these words we must look at another scene which occurred six weeks later. What Christ had foretold has just come to pass: with faces uplift to heaven they have watched Him

[1] S. John xiii. 33. [2] S. John xvi. 7.

disappear, knowing as they do so that they will never again behold His earthly form and that they will never again walk by His side, or listen to His words of teaching and encouragement. "It came to pass," S. Luke tells us, that "while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven."[1] What then was the effect produced upon them? Was it a passionate outburst of sorrow, or was it grief too deep for words? We turn to S. Luke's narrative for the answer, and read: "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple, blessing God".

Once again we are constrained to ask: Was this strange manifestation of joy followed by a great reaction: as they realised what His absence involved and the troubles and persecutions which He had predicted loomed before them, did the sorrow with which they had first heard of His approaching departure return upon them with redoubled force? How far this was from being the case we learn from a further statement by S. Luke in the second chapter of the Acts,[2] where he tells us that they did eat their food with exultation, praising God.

What then was the cause of the joy which

[1] S. Luke xxiv. 51. [2] Acts ii. 46 f.

became the possession of Christ's first disciples? Their happiness was due to a discovery which they could not make till Christ had withdrawn His bodily presence from them, which changed their loss to gain and made them actually thankful that their Lord was no longer present in visible form. The discovery was that their Lord was no longer *with* them but *in* them. For months they had been privileged to witness His actions, to listen to His teaching and to gain inspiration from His character, but all the while, as they had walked from place to place, or sat in the house with Him, they had been looking at His life from outside, and the more they had got to know Him, the more conscious had they become of the immeasurable distance which separated their life from His. They had longed to draw nearer to Him, but their increasing consciousness that He was something more than man seemed to enhance the difficulty of approaching Him. Once on the shores of the Lake of Galilee He had startled them by speaking of a union closer than they had ever dreamt of as possible, when He had uttered mysterious words regarding the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood. But no one had understood what He had said, and while some had gone back, offended at His words, they had followed Him bewildered and

unenlightened. But now all was changed. The mysterious words had revealed their hidden meaning. They had discovered that their ascended Master was nearer to them than He had ever been before, and that they could be, and were, identified with Him. How could they help praising God when each of them could say: "I live, yet not I, but my unseen Master liveth in me". This was their first discovery, but there was a second. Not only had they come to understand that they might themselves live a life in closest union with Christ, but they had learned that this life could be shared by them with others. Christ's promise, made just before His ascension, that they should receive power and become His witnesses, had been fulfilled, and the power of influencing the lives of others had become theirs. The knowledge that Christ was in them and was their life might inspire them with personal gratitude and thanksgiving, but the knowledge that they could communicate this life to others filled them with an abiding joy.

These two discoveries meant everything to Christ's first disciples. In the light of their experience the Christian of to-day has need to ask: What do these discoveries mean to me? Have I passed beyond the stage of admiring Christ from the outside? Admiration of Christ does

not always result in an attempt to reproduce His character. The demand which He makes upon men is not for admiration but for assimilation. He who would inherit the legacy of joy which Christ intended him to possess must repeat the discoveries of His earliest disciples. He must believe and act as though it were true that Christ dwells within him, and strong in the strength which this discovery will give to him he will be able to influence others and to help them to enter with him into the joy of his Lord.

V.

CHRIST'S LEGACY OF PEACE.

THERE are two causes which may account for the existence of peace in nature or in human life. Peace may result from peaceful surroundings, or it may be due to the controlling influence of a power which is independent of circumstance. The one is like the calm upon the ocean's surface, which is liable at any moment to be interrupted by wind and storm: the other is like the unbroken quiet which exists deep below the surface of the ocean, and which the storms that rage upon its surface cannot disturb. This was the peace which Christ possessed and which He bequeathed to His followers. The unbroken calm which characterised His life was not the outcome of favourable or peaceful surroundings. Nor was His the peace which comes to the recluse as the result of solitude and retirement from the world and its cares. The only intervals for quiet thought which He obtained, as far as we know, were taken out of the short nights which separated

one day of strenuous activity from another. The incidental note which is supplied by one of the evangelists : " They had no leisure so much as to eat,"[1] describes what was apparently a common experience in the life of Christ. Even when He took His apostles apart, with the express object of obtaining quiet, their rest was immediately interrupted by the crowds which followed Him. Nor again was His the peace which comes to a man when his work has become a visible success and hostile criticism has been silenced. The peace of Christ's life continued unbroken despite His knowledge that He was misunderstood by His friends and wilfully misinterpreted by His opponents. The increasing failure of His public ministry and the knowledge that His death would take place before the nature of His mission had been recognised even by His own disciples, failed to elicit any sign of impatience. Moreover, He regarded the peace which He enjoyed as a possession, which, after His death, His disciples might expect to secure, and in the very hour when, as He knew, the plots of His enemies were approaching a successful issue, and when all suggestions of earthly peace were farthest removed from Him, He uttered the words, " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ".[2]

[1] S. Mark vi. 31. [2] S. John xiv. 27.

The majestic calm which characterised His behaviour during the final scenes of His earthly life awed in turn His own disciples, the soldiers who were sent to arrest Him, and the Roman governor who examined Him.[1]

The more we study His life, the more significant do the words of S. Paul become, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to the which also ye were called": [2] the more striking too appears the contrast between the teaching and experience of Christ and that of the founders or teachers of all other religions. The Hindu, for example, believes that peace is to be obtained by mental abstraction and reabsorption into the divinity, which involve contempt for and neglect of all his material surroundings, whilst the Buddhist holds that peace is to be obtained by the extinction of all desire. The commonest emblem which meets the eyes of the traveller in the East is the image of Buddha which is carved or cast according to a conventional pattern. The oriental values this conventional image, not because he regards it as a lifelike representation of Buddha, but because of the symbolism which it suggests. The passionless serenity and unbroken peace which it portrays are to him a teaching

[1] S. Mark x. 32; S. John xviii. 6, xix. 8.
[2] Col. iii. 15.

and an inspiration. But how far removed is the peace of Christ from the peace of Buddha. The one may be gained by those who lead the busiest lives, who have "no leisure so much as to eat," and for whom the hours of the night provide their only opportunities for quiet thought and meditation, the other, the peace symbolised by the image of Buddha, can only be hoped for by those who have retired from the world and its business and who have successfully extinguished every human passion and desire.

The thought that man can attain divine peace amidst the ordinary pursuits of his daily life is one to which there is no parallel in the teaching of non-Christian religions. It enhances the dignity of man's life and brings him very near to God. For there is no attribute more characteristic of God than peace.

> Yes, peace is something more than joy,
> Even the joys above;
> For peace of all created things
> Is likest Him we love.[1]

To share with God the peace which He possesses is a privilege which belongs to men in virtue of the fact that He has made them partakers of His own nature.

Though we have no complete biographical

[1] Faber.

record of S. Paul, the glimpses into his inner life which his letters afford indicate that his constant prayers for his readers, that the peace of God might dwell within them, were suggested not so much by a consciousness of his own needs, but by the fulfilment of these needs. Thus he writes: "the mind of the spirit is life and peace";[1] "the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times, in all ways";[2] "the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly";[3] "the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus";[4] and, once more, "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts".[5] The peace of Christ which S. Paul possessed, and which he desired that his readers should possess, had become his, despite a life of ceaseless agitation and unrest. Towards the end of his second letter to the Christians at Corinth, after summarising the troubles and persecutions which he had suffered by sea and by land, at the hands of Jews and of Gentiles, he says: "Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches".[6] But ere he bids his readers farewell, he writes, and the words are obviously the outcome of his per-

[1] Rom. viii. 6. [2] 2 Thess. iii. 16. [3] 1 Thess. v. 23.
[4] Phil. iv. 7. [5] Col. iii. 15. [6] 2 Cor. xi. 28.

sonal experience: "the God of love and peace shall be with you".[1]

The peace which S. Paul enjoyed resulted from the conviction that he was—to use words which occur in more than one of his letters—"an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God".[2] His life, despite its manifold distractions, was a life of peace because it was lived in complete harmony with the will of God. The peace of God meant for him more than passive resignation to the Divine will. It meant joyful co-operation with the purpose of a loving Father. S. Paul's example and teaching alike proclaim that whilst the peace of Christ may be secured by the man whose life is full of occasions for anxiety and sorrow, the purpose and trend of the life of its possessors must be in harmony with the will of God. Of such Keble writes:—

There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime:
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.[3]

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 11. [2] Col. i. 1.
[3] "The Christian Year," S. Matthew's Day.

It is vain, however, to invite a man to cultivate the peace of God in his heart apart from any consideration of the past which lies behind him. Memory forms an indissoluble link between the past and the present, as it will be the connecting link between the present and the future. All that the judge of mankind will need to say to anyone hereafter will be the words, "Son, remember". Moreover, the judgment which will then be consummated is one which is constantly anticipated in the present. If, as Richter has said, "memory is the only paradise out of which man can never be driven," it is in many cases the torment from which man by his unaided efforts can never be redeemed. Human memory has been compared to the deep and restless sea. A vessel sinks far out of sight of land and leaves no survivor or record of its fate. Months, or even years, pass by and every trace of it appears to have been lost, but when hope has been abandoned and the disaster has been well-nigh forgotten, the wanderer on some distant shore is startled in his solitary walk to see stranded on the beach before him a plank or mast of the forgotten vessel. So is it in regard to human memory. The acts which a man has done, or the desires which he has harboured in his mind, become submerged beneath the level of his conscious thought, and seem to

have become separated from him for ever. But what has once been incorporated into his memory can never be wholly lost. Months, years, the greater part of a lifetime may pass, but the time comes when, in the quiet stillness of the night, or whilst gazing upon some beautiful landscape, or listening to strains of music, or amidst the suggestive intercourse with long familiar friends, his memory recovers in a moment all that has been lost.

If then a man's peace is not to be interrupted by the resurrection of his past and the peace of Christ is to become his permanent possession, he must do what Bunyan's pilgrim did, he must bring the burden of his past sin and failure to the foot of the Cross, and as he seeks forgiveness for the past he will hear the words which the pilgrim heard, as the load rolled from his shoulders, "Peace be to thee". S. Paul in writing to the Ephesians said: "In Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ, for he is our peace".[1] He who would secure that the peace of Christ should rule in his heart needs to gain the assurance that the past has been forgiven, even as he needs also an indwelling power which may enable him to rise above the cares and worries of the present.

[1] Ephes. ii. 13 f.

Unrest is a distinguishing characteristic of the present age. The development of the telegraph and telephone, and other modern inventions, whilst they increase the amount of work which the individual can accomplish, make it more and more difficult for him to secure time for quiet thought and meditation. The literature which obtains the widest circulation to-day reflects this tendency. The books in demand at the circulating libraries are not works of history, art, or poetry, or the standard novels, but are those which embody lower ideals of life and action. The restless spirit of the age may also be illustrated by the superficial sight-seeing which satisfies many who travel, not in order to study foreign lands, but in order to find some new sensation, or to escape the monotony of quiet work. Matthew Arnold says of such :

> In cities should we English lie,
> Where cries are rising ever new,
> And men's incessant stream goes by—
> We who pursue
>
> Our business with unslackening stride,
> Traverse in troops, with care-filled breast,
> The soft Mediterranean side,
> The Nile, the East,

> And see sights from pole to pole,
> And glance and nod and bustle by,
> And never once possess our soul
> Before we die.[1]

There are others who have no opportunities for travel or sight-seeing, but who are compelled to live a life of monotonous toil. In their case it is not the pressure of work so much as discontent with the circumstances or nature of their work which renders peace often difficult of attainment. Dante in his "Paradiso" asks one of the spirits whom he meets in the lowest division of Paradise, whether she and the other spirits with her were content with their lowly place, and whether they did not desire a more lofty place and one in which they could see and know more. The answer which he received was: "Brother, the quality of love stilleth our will, and maketh us long only for what we have, and giveth us no other thirst. Did we desire to be more aloft, our longings were discordant from His will who here assorteth us, . . . 'tis the essence of this blessed being to hold ourselves within the Divine will, whereby our own wills are themselves made one, so that our being thus, from threshold unto threshold throughout the realm, is a joy to all the realm as to the

[1] "A Southern Night."

King who draweth our wills to what He willeth, and His will is our peace."[1]

His will is our peace,—he who can say this with a full heart has left behind him the causes of unrest which render peace impossible, and, though still on earth, is already within the portals of paradise.

Christ taught His disciples that peace should result from a belief in God's overruling love. "Be not anxious," He said, "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."[2]

In the experience of many the daily cares and worries connected with their household arrangements and the petty anxieties which arise from their letters and their intercourse with others are more destructive of peace than are the great sorrows and trials of their life. The disciple of Christ needs to make good his claim to his Master's legacy of peace on such occasions as these, even more than in the great crises of his life. With the consciousness of his need, however, should come the realisation of the completeness of its supply as the words of his Master sound afresh in his ears: "My peace I give unto you . . . let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful".

[1] Canto iii. [2] S. Matt. vi. 25, 32.

VI.

CHRIST'S LEGACY OF HUMILITY.

In the last three chapters an attempt has been made to consider the legacy of love, joy and peace which Jesus Christ bequeathed to His disciples, and the conditions under which this legacy may be secured.

There is a fourth attribute, the possession of which must precede all other Christian attributes which Christ specially desired to bequeath to His disciples, but which, up to the last evening that He spent with them, had not become their possession.

On this last night He said to them: "I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done to you".[1] The apostles, to whom these words were spoken, were at the time assembled in an upper room in Jerusalem with their hearts full of anxious forebodings, but with no distinct apprehension that their Master was in the very act of leaving them. So little did

[1] S. John xiii. 15.

they realise the overwhelming sorrow that was about to befall them that, as S. Luke states,[1] after the solemn institution of the Last Supper, there arose a dispute among them, which of them was to be accounted greatest.

In the hope that a final object-lesson might impress upon them what they had so far failed to learn from His teaching, Jesus rose from supper, and assuming the guise and attitude of a slave, proceeded to wash their feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

"When he had washed their feet and taken his garments, and sat down again he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you."

We can imagine how, in after years, whenever any question of precedence arose, the thoughts of the disciples would go back to the scene enacted on that Thursday night, and how their Master's words sounding again in their ears, "Ye also should do as I have done," would have helped to banish jealousy and to render personal ambition impossible. It is interesting

[1] xxii. 24.

to note that James, whom they eventually chose to be their head in Jerusalem, was not one of those who were present at the Last Supper. It is natural to connect the object-lesson on humility which Christ gave to His disciples, with His words recorded by S. Matthew: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart".[1] Before the time of Christ meekness, lowliness and humility were regarded by Western nations and specially by the Greeks and Romans as synonymous with meanness of spirit, servility, and cowardice. Neither in the East, nor in the Far East where men had attained to a truer perception of the value of meekness and humility, had any religious teacher ever exalted them to the high position which was assigned to them by Christ. We shall understand better Christ's teaching in regard to the nature and importance of humility if we consider the other occasion on which He tried to teach His disciples humility by means of an object-lesson. They had come to Him with the question which they had already debated amongst themselves, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" In reply to their question, "He called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little

[1] xi. 29.

children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child,[1] the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."[2]

To understand the significance of Christ's words and action it is necessary to remember what the world thought about little children at the time when this scene occurred. The ancients thought that it was their first duty to put away childish things. Christ, who sought to bring about a new and higher development of character, perceived that there were elements in childhood to be preserved in the most developed manhood, and that a man must acquire again the humility of childhood if he would be in the truest sense a man. It is impossible to name any statement in the teaching of Christ which was so original and so completely opposed to that of all other religious teachers as that which is contained in the words "of such is the kingdom of God".

In the Old Testament children are referred to as a desirable possession, as the pride and glory of their parents, and as valuable assets of the place or people to which they belonged, but

[1] Compare the late but suggestive tradition that this little child was Ignatius.

[2] S. Matt. xviii. 1-4.

they are not regarded as possessing any rights or any distinctive characteristics which might give them an independent claim to consideration. And if little attention is paid to children in the Old Testament, they are still less esteemed in the religious books belonging to the great non-Christian religions such as Confucianism,[1] Hinduism and Buddhism. The last of these religions may be said to be more careful of the life of animals than of children.

It would be easy to quote passages from the sacred books of any of these religions in proof of the statement that the personality and individual characteristics of a little child were deemed unworthy of consideration by the religious teachers of old.

Jesus Christ was the first great teacher who showed a genuine sympathy for childhood and was perhaps the only teacher in antiquity who cared for childhood as such. He was the first who loved children for the sake of what they were, not of what they might become.

In answer to the question, what traits of child-

[1] Confucianism, which lays the utmost stress upon the duties of children towards their parents, has hardly anything to say concerning the duties of parents towards their children. The result is that in no other country is child-life held so cheap. For years and probably centuries tens of thousands of children have each year been murdered or exposed to die by their parents.

hood Christ desired to see reproduced in His disciples, we should perhaps be right in saying that the special traits which a child possesses, and which He desired His disciples to possess, were *innocence*, *simplicity*, *trustfulness* and *teachableness*. He who, in obedience to Christ's demand, would humble himself and become as a little child, must seek and obtain the assurance that his sins have been forgiven and, as far as may be, obliterated; he must acquire the singleness of heart and purpose which in the case of a child precedes the birth of ambition; he must learn to confide in God and to trust his fellowmen; and, lastly, he must put away the prejudices which too often accompany growth to manhood and which close the avenues to the apprehension of the truth. For teachableness is the first condition of obtaining knowledge. It is ignorant pride which darkens the eyes of men and prevents them from seeing God in the world around them.

> Dark is the world to thee,
> Thyself art the reason why.[1]

The man who thinks that he knows, or is sure that he is right, can make no progress towards higher truth.

[1] Tennyson, "The Higher Pantheism".

The demand which Christ makes of those who would enter His kingdom that they should become as little children will seem to many as impossible of fulfilment as the demand for a new birth seemed to Nicodemus. Notwithstanding His example and teaching the apostles failed altogether to reproduce the humility of their Master, whilst He was still with them in bodily presence. It was not till they were "clothed with power from on high"[1] that their characters were transformed, and that their selfish ambitions were obliterated by love for their Master.

The Spirit which descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost has not been withdrawn from the world, and His transforming power is still at the command of all who "labour and are heavy laden" and desire to take upon them the yoke and to learn of Him who said, "I am meek and lowly of heart".

Humility, said an ancient writer,[2] is the casket in which all other graces are contained. Humility, moreover, is the indispensable preparation for the service of men. Thus S. Peter wrote: "Gird yourselves with humility to serve one another".[3] Once again, Humility is the child of

[1] S. Luke xxiv. 49.

[2] Basil, "Const. Mon.," 16. *Ταπεινοφροσύνη δὲ θησαυροφυλάκιον ἀρετῶν.*

[3] S. Peter v. 5.

hope. "Hope"—wrote Frederick Maurice, "hope that I, the meanest of God's creatures, am destined for the noblest purposes and the highest glory, is that which alone can make me humble or keep me so. . . . Very bitter experience has assured me that humility and despondency are not loving friends but sworn enemies. You must aspire high if you would know yourself to be nothing. If you would feel yourself to be the worm that you are, you must claim your privilege of being like God."[1]

Missionaries and others who have tried to interpret the character of Christ to the peoples of the Far East have found that the attributes of His character which appeal to them most are His meekness and humility. The difference between the characters of the peoples who inhabit the East and the West may be illustrated by the fact that it was their insistence upon these traits of character by the missionaries who evangelised Europe, and especially Northern Europe, which elicited the strongest opposition to the faith of Christ on the part of their hearers.

On the other hand the difficulty which Christian missionaries experience to-day in India and the Far East is not that the meek and lowly Jesus

[1] "Life of Frederick Denison Maurice," vol. i., p. 143.

whom they preach is out of harmony with the religious ideals of their hearers, but that their own failure and the failure of the European residents in the East to reproduce these traits prevents the character of Christ from exerting the influence upon the people of the East which it would otherwise exert.[1] In the providence of God the task of interpreting Christ to the East has been specially committed to the English-speaking peoples, who find it more difficult than perhaps any other race to cultivate in themselves the graces of meekness and humility.

The majority of the inhabitants of the East cannot read the story of Christ's life and they can only judge of Him by what they see in the lives of those who are His nominal followers. If these fail to reflect the humility of their Master they cannot but misjudge Him, nor can the desire to imitate Him be aroused within them.

The importance of humility from the standpoint of all who desire to commend Christ to the non-Christian world emphasises the importance of the answer to the question, How may the conditions favourable to the development of this grace most easily be produced? All will agree

[1] See "The Interpretation of the Character of Christ to non-Christian Peoples," pp. 10-14, 20, 27 f.

that it is not by constantly thinking about humility that a man can become humble. In the beautiful poem which contains the story of Job, we read how a self-assertive and self-righteous man was suddenly transformed into a humble penitent. The explanation of the change which took place in his character is contained in the words addressed by him to God: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes".[1]

The experience of Job embodies an abiding principle. To see, that is to know God, is to recognise the wickedness and folly of human pride. At the time when the book of Job was written, men's opportunities for knowing God were more limited than they are now, or than they have been since God became incarnate. He who would gain a just conception of his own littleness and sinfulness can best do so, not by morbid introspection, but by studying the revelation which God has given of Himself in Jesus Christ. To such an one we would say: Learn the story of Christ's life by heart, strive to look upon the world around you from His standpoint, to sympathise with His aims and aspirations, to understand the meaning of His love, and to

[1] xlii. 5 f.

forget, as you will then find it possible to forget, yourself and your own interests, whilst contemplating the prospect on which His eyes were fixed. Try, as far as the limitations of human thought will permit, to estimate the extent of His self-sacrifice in coming into a world of sin and sorrow, follow Him from scene to scene during His earthly life, meditate upon His humility, His sympathetic love and His limitless patience, go with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane, watch with Him during that dread hour when, deprived of all human sympathy, He wrestled alone with the powers of darkness, follow Him from one scene to another on the Friday morning, when He endured with Divine patience every insult that malice could devise, and when at length you take your stand beneath the shadow of His cross, you will be constrained to use the words of Job: "Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes".

We have tried to consider by what means the follower of Christ may hope to reproduce in himself four attributes of His character, love, joy, peace, and humility. S. Paul, in writing to the Galatian Christians, described these attributes as fruits of the Holy Spirit. The word fruit which

implies growth is specially applicable to the development of human character. Men cannot produce fruit, nor can they produce character by sudden or artificial means. Time, and conditions favourable to gradual development, are essential in both cases, but in neither case do they furnish the means for understanding the nature of growth. No one can explain how from something in the air, the rain, or the earth, plants and animals increase in size and develop, as we see them do, but we do not on this account doubt the reality of their growth. A like mystery enshrouds the growth of human character. Two points of resemblance in the case of natural and spiritual fruit are the slowness of the process of growth and its dependence upon external conditions. He who is tempted to give way to impatience or despair because he cannot understand the laws which govern the growth of human character, or because the fruits of love, joy, peace, and humility develop so slowly within him, may gain encouragement from the analogy which exists between natural and spiritual growth. Nature suggests to him that the longer anything is intended to last, the slower is its growth and development. The growth of the butterfly is as rapid as its life is short. The long-lived elephant takes a proportionate time to reach maturity.

In the case of a child its body grows quickly, its mind more slowly, its character, which is to be eternal, slowest of all.

The second point of resemblance between natural and spiritual growth is afforded by the dependence in either case of growth upon external conditions. Though we cannot understand how a plant or animal grows, it is easy to name the external conditions by which its growth is controlled. We know, for example, how the presence of heat, light, air and moisture are indispensable for the growth of a plant. Deprive it of any of these conditions and its growth is thwarted or destroyed. So, too, whilst we cannot explain how the Christian character develops, we can nevertheless ascertain the conditions under which its growth becomes possible. The essential conditions of spiritual growth and the analogy between these conditions and those which relate to natural growth were explained by Christ in the parable of the Sower and the interpretation which immediately followed.

The graces which S. Paul enumerates in his description of the Christian character, are described as being the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. If Christ's character is to be reproduced in men to-day, and His legacy of love, joy, peace, and humility is to be appropriated, this can only be

by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Though the study of Christ's character may inspire men to make an effort to imitate His example, union with or assimilation to Christ can only be obtained by the direct agency of the Divine Spirit. S. Paul told the Christians at Corinth, that notwithstanding all their sin and quarrelling, the Spirit of God dwelt in them.[1] Because His words represent an abiding truth we can dare to anticipate that the character of Jesus Christ may yet be reproduced and revealed in us. To set before any one the standard of Christ's life and bid him reproduce that life and that character is mere mockery, unless you can at the same time say to him, The Spirit of God that dwelleth in you, even though He be an unrecognised guest, has been given to you for the purpose of enabling you to imitate Christ and to live the life Divine. In proportion as a man is prepared to live and act as though it were true that God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into his heart,[2] and that "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead"[3] dwells within him, can he hope to follow in the steps of his Master, and to appropriate the legacy of love, joy, peace, and humility which Christ has bequeathed to him.

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [2] Gal. iv. 6. [3] Rom. viii. 11.

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